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Mrs PIOZZI'S HOUSE,

AT STREATHAM.

ESSAYS,

BIOGRAPHICAL, CRITICAL, AND HISTORICAL,

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

RAMBLER, ADVENTURER, & IDLER,

AND OF THE VARIOUS

PERIODICAL PAPERS

WHICH,

In Imitation of the Writings of Steele and Addison,

HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED

Between the Close of the eighth volume of the Spectator, and the commencement of the year 1809.

BY NATHAN DRAKE, M. D.

AUTHOR OF LITERARY HOURS,

AND OF

ESSAYS ON THE TATLER, SPECTATOR, AND GUARDIAN.

Evolvendi penitus auctores qui de virtute præcipiunt, ut —vita cum scientia divinarum rerum sit humanarumque conjuncta. QUINTILIANUS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

THE plan of these volumes being, in several respects, different from that which was adopted for the Essays on the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian*, I have thought it necessary to place before the reader, in this Preface, a connected view of its construction.

It is divided, as in the former work, into five *Parts*, and these parts into *Essays;* but, for the purpose of compression, the Dissertations on Style, Humour, Ethics, &c. instead of being

given in separate essays, are interwoven with the biographical branch.

So numerous have been the Biographies and Anecdotes of Dr. JOHNSON, that, with regard to the occurrences of his *life* and *conversation*, nothing new can be expected. But, when he is considered merely in the capacity of a man of letters, the field is still open for novelty of remark and variety of illustration. I have, therefore, chiefly confined myself to the contemplation of his *Literary Character*, into which I have entered, I trust, more fully than will be found in any preceding work. The arrangement, too, which has been chosen for the narrative, has not, I have reason to think, been anticipated, and removes the monotony resulting from a close

adherence to chronological order. The capital work, for instance, in every province of literature which he embellished, is seized, as it occurs, in the progress of his career, for the foundation of a full consideration of whatever, at any period of his life, he produced under each department.

In this mode his powers and productions as a POET, a BIBLIOGRAPHER, a BIOGRAPHER, an ESSAYIST, a PHILOLOGER, a NOVELLIST, a COMMENTATOR, a POLITICIAN, a TOURIST, a CRITIC, an EPISTOLARY WRITER, and a THEOLOGIAN, are dwelt upon at great length; and, though the illustration be occasionally minute, it blends sufficiently with the design, I hope, to constitute an harmonious whole.

The entire plan will be at once perceived from the following Sketch.

PART I.

ESSAY 1. Observations on the Taste which had been generated by Steele and Addison for Periodical Composition. Enumeration of the Periodical Papers which were written during the publication of the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian.

ESSAY 2. Observations on the Periodical Papers which were written between the Close of the eighth volume of the Spectator, and the commencement of the Rambler, with some general remarks on their tendency and complexion.

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PART III.

ESSAY 1. Sketches Biographical and Critical of the Occasional Contributors to the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler.

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ESSAY 2. Observations on the Periodical Papers which have been published between the Close of the Idler and the present period.

ESSAY 3. The same concluded.

PART V.

ESSAY. Conclusion of the whole Work. Ta
of Periodical Papers from the y
1709 to the year 1809, being
completion of a Century from
commencement of the Tatler.

Hadleigh, Suffolk,
July 1st, 1808.

ESSAYS,

BIOGRAPHICAL, CRITICAL, AND HISTORICAL.

PART I.

ESSAY I.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TASTE WHICH HAD BEEN GENERATED BY STEELE AND ADDISON FOR PERIODICAL COMPOSITION. ENUMERATION OF THE PERIODICAL PAPERS WHICH WERE WRITTEN DURING THE PUBLICATION OF THE TATLER, SPECTATOR, AND GUARDIAN.

THAT the highly-finished models of Periodical Composition which had been given to the world by Steele and Addison, should excite a spirit of emulation, and give birth to a number of competitors, was an event equally to be wished for and expected. Such, however, was the literary excellence of which the Spectator had to boast, that many years elapsed before a Paper was

produced whose merits afforded any very just title to the claim of rivalship. In the interim, it properly becomes a part of our province not wholly to overlook the crowd of publications which, under the appellation of periodical, issued in succession from the press. An attention to these various works, and they are infinitely more numerous than has been generally supposed, will, if duly proportioned to their moral and literary rank, not only be singularly curious, as affording a novel view of the progress of polite literature, but will, at the same time, prove the best introduction to the classical labours of the Rambler.

The popularity which attended the periodical productions of Steele and Addison, and the admiration which they had excited throughout the kingdom, speedily established a decided taste for a species of composition alike adapted to grave or gay subjects, to the purposes of instruction and amusement; and fortunate would it have been for the interests of general literature, had the swarm of imitators strictly confined themselves to the plan of the Spectator, to a laudable attempt at reforming the morals and the manners of the age. The facility, however, with which this mode of writing might be rendered a vehicle for slander, for rancorous politics and virulent satire, soon tempted many to deviate from the salutary

example of the authors of the Tatler and Spectator; and the former of these papers had not run half its course before it was assailed by a multitude of writers, who were actuated by no other motives than those of envy and ill-nature. Of a few of these antagonists, Addison has condescended to take some notice in the Tatler, N° 229, and has probably preserved the names of several productions which had otherwise been unknown to posterity. "I was threatened," he observes, "to be answered weekly *tit for tat;* I was undermined by the *Whisperer;* haunted by Tom Brown's Ghost; scolded at by a *Female Tatler.*—I have been *annotated, re-tattled, examined,* and *condoled.*"

In the catalogue of periodical works which I am about to place before the reader, I shall, as a matter of mere curiosity, enumerate, as far as my researches have enabled me to proceed, every Paper, literary or political, which, in its form or mode of publication, has adopted the plan of the Spectator and Freeholder. As the principal intention, however, of these pages is to mark the progress of elegant literature, and of moral improvement, and to ascertain how far the periodical Essayists have contributed towards their promotion, I shall dwell on those productions alone which have been written, not only in the

form, but with a portion of the spirit and purport, of their great originals, the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian.

Of the various papers that appeared during the publication of these standard works, and which adopted their structure, I shall commence with those that seem to have arisen from an eager desire to calumniate, or to share the profits of, the Tatler; and the authors of which, as Addison remarks, every day turned a penny by nibbling at the lucubrations of Isaac Bickerstaff.* Foremost of the train are, 1. The RE-TATLER, and 2. The CONDOLER, of whose existence, however, no other proof now remains than what is to be found in the pages of Addison.† 3. The TIT FOR TAT, the first number of which appeared on March 2d, 1709-10, was published under the assumed Name of John Partridge, Esq. who by a glaring misnomer has termed his papers Dilucidations; they are a compound of nonsense and obscurity, but happily reach no further than No. 5, which is dated March 11th, 1709.

4. THE FEMALE TATLER. This work was written by Mr. Thomas Baker, and commenced its circulation in 1709. It extended to many numbers, most of which are now no longer extant. Its gross personalities obtained its author a sound

* Tatler, No. 229. † See Tatler, No. 229, Note. Edit. 1739.

cudgelling from an offended family in the city; and in the month of October, 1709, it was presented as a nuisance by the grand jury at the Old Bailey. Mr. Baker, whose general style of writing was ironical, took every opportunity of recording the singularities of Steele, whether personal or moral. In number 72, for instance, he has ridiculed Sir Richard's absence of mind and peculiarity of attitude in walking the streets. "I saw Mr. Bickerstaff going to the corner of St. James's in the beginning of December. It was a great fog, yet the 'squire wore his hat under his left arm, and, as if that side had been lame, all the stress of his gait was laid upon the other; he stooped very much forward; and whenever his right foot came to the ground, which was always set down with a more than ordinary and affected force, his cane, with a great vibration of the arm struck the stones, whilst a violent jerk of his head kept time with the latter. I observed several besides myself that took notice of this strange singularity, which nobody could imagine to proceed from less than either madness or despair. It is not to be conceived how any wise man alive, that had been such an implacable enemy to all singularities and mimic postures, and writ so learnedly concerning the use of the cane, could make such a ridiculous figure of himself in the street, at the

very moment that his *Os homini sublime*, &c. was a-printing." The allusion in the last line of this quotation is to the motto of the Tatler, N° 108. Steele is supposed to have ridiculed Mr. Baker under the character of Nick Doubt, in N° 91 of the Tatler.

5. THE TORY TATLER. Of this paper, which seems from its title to have been written in opposition to the political principles of Steele, I have been able to obtain no other information than that it was worthless and short-lived.

6. THE TELL TALE is another ephemeral production, of whose existence scarcely a trace remains. It is noticed, however, by Gay in his Essay on the Present State of Wit, and is there said to have been christened the Tell Tale in order to please the ladies.

7. THE GAZETTE A-LA-MODE. The first number of this paper was published on Thursday May 12th, 1709. It appears to have soon deservedly dropped into oblivion.

8. THE TATLING HARLOT. Of this foolish paper three numbers are extant in the British Museum, the first of which is dated August 22d, 1709.

9. THE WHISPERER. Though this work (to which Addison has given the epithet undermining) is said to have been written by Mrs.

Jenny Bickerstaff, half-sister to Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. no proof of the relationship is visible in the construction of her style and sentiments. "It is clear," says the annotator on N° 229 of the Tatler, "she was not related, even in a left-handed way to the family of the Staffs. Her undermining was like the work of a mole on the site of Alnwick Castle, which measures a mile round the walls."

10. THE GENERAL POSTSCRIPT. A periodical paper under this title was published in 1709. N° 19, dated November 9th, 1709, is quoted by the annotator on N° 91 of the Tatler. It is probable that Mr. Baker, the author of the Female Tatler, contributed to its support, as an advertisement by him is subjoined to N° 19.

11. THE MONTHLY AMUSEMENT. Two periodical publications under this title made their appearance about the commencement of the eighteenth century. The first was projected by Mr. Ozell; but, being principally occupied by translations from French novels or plays, it cannot with propriety have a place in this enumeration; the second, by Hughes, was more assimilated to the form as originally established by Steele, and began its career in November, 1709.

12. THE TATLER, VOL. THE FIFTH. This spurious Tatler, of which I have given some

account in vol. 3d, p. 366, of my Essays, was conducted by Harrison and Swift, with the occasional assistance of Henley and Congreve. It consists of 52 numbers, the first published on the 13th of January, 1710-11, and the last on the 19th of May, 1711.

It is chiefly valuable for the light occasionally thrown on the history of the genuine Tatler. In N° 28, Swift has described Steele under the appellation of Hilario.

13. THE TATLER, BY BAKER. No sooner had Steele given up the censorship, than a number of spurious Tatlers immediately issued from the press. Besides Harrison's, which we have just mentioned, the following advertisement indicates that two more were at that period in existence, and that one of them was conducted by Mr. Baker, who had been under the necessity of relinquishing his former attempt through the interference of the law.* "Whereas an advertisement was yesterday delivered out by the author of the late Female Tatler, insinuating, according to his custom, that he is Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. This is to give notice, that this paper is continued to be sold by John Morphew as formerly, and may easily be distinguished from the spurious paper by the number and publisher's name he has

* The Female Tatler.

assumed." This curious notice is subjoined to a Tatler in folio, pretending to be a continuation of the original Tatler, dated January 13th, 1710, and numbered 276.

14. ANNOTATIONS ON THE TATLER. This publication, to which Addison alludes in N° 229 of the Tatler, was written by William Oldisworth, under the fictitious name of Walter Wagstaff, Esq. and was published in 1710, in 2 vols. 24to. The author, however, to shield himself as much as possible from the chastisement which he justly merited, asserted in his title-page that the work was a translation from the French of a Monsieur Bournelle. On this virulent but foolish production, Steele is supposed to have passed sentence in the concluding paragraph of N°. 79 of the Tatler.

15. THE VISIONS OF SIR HEISTER RYLEY. Though these Visions are a professed imitation of the Tatler in point of form, every paper being separated into two or three parts, and these again dated from different places, with regard to manner and style they are placed at an infinite distance from their model. They consist of eighty numbers,* the first of which was published on

* Printed in small 4to; and, as the title-page expresses Vol. 1, we may presume that a continuation was intended; but, probably, the want of sale gave a *broad hint* to the Editor, which he had just wit enough to take.

August 21st, 1710, and the last on February 21st, 1710-11. So worthless, however, is the entire texture of this compilation, that I know not whether a single page can be deemed worthy of preservation.

16. THE GROWLER. The only information that I have been able to obtain relative to this paper is from Gay's Essay on the Present State of Wit. Speaking of the multitude of Papers to which the Tatler had given birth, he remarks, that "the expiration of Bickerstaff's Lucubrations was attended with much the same consequences as the death of Melibæus's ox, in Virgil; as the latter engendered swarms of bees, the former immediately produced whole swarms of little satirical scribblers. One of these authors called himself the Growler, and assured us, that, to make amends for Mr. Steele's silence, he was resolved to growl at us weekly as long as we should think fit to give him any encouragement."

17. THE EXAMINER. The political lucubrations of Steele in the Tatler, though neither numerous, nor written with much asperity, gave such offence to the Tories, who were then rising into power, that they thought it necessary to establish a periodical paper under the title of the Examiner, as a defence of their principles and views. The authors of this once celebrated Paper were, for

the most part, persons of considerable ability; but the virulence and rancour with which they attacked Steele and calumniated their opponents, reflect no small share of disgrace upon their memory. The early numbers of the Examiner were published under the superintendence of Dr. William King, who was the author of the fifth, eleventh, and twelfth papers. He was assisted by Bolingbroke, by Prior, who contributed N° 6, by Dr. Atterbury, and Dr. Friend. Dr. King was soon superseded, however, by Swift, who, commencing with N° 14, wrote thirty-three Essays in succession, and then relinquished the task to Mrs. Manley, who concluded the first volume, in point of literary merit the best portion of the work. The management of this scurrilous undertaking was then entrusted to Mr. Oldisworth, who completed the fifth volume, published nineteen numbers of a sixth, and would probably have printed many more had not the death of the Queen arrested the progress of his pen. The Examiner existed during the four last years of Queen Anne, the first number being dated August 3d, 1710, and the last July 26th, 1714. It had the merit of giving origin to the Whig-Examiner of Addison, to the Reader of Steele, and to,

18. The Medley. This paper, which was

not strictly confined to politics, immediately succeeded the Whig-Examiner, and carried on, with considerable spirit, the attack upon Swift and his party. It began on the 5th of October, 1710, under the auspices of Mr. Maynwaring, a gentleman of great accomplishments and ability, and of whom, as intimately connected with Steele, I shall give a short biographical sketch. He was born at Ightfield in Shropshire, in 1668; and, after the usual grammatical education, was sent, at the age of seventeen, to Christ Church, Oxford. Having employed a residence of several years at this university, in the ardent cultivation of classical literature, he retired, for a short time, into the country; but, adopting the profession of the law, he found it necessary to fix in the metropolis. Here he prosecuted his studies until the conclusion of the peace of Ryswic; when, availing himself of that event, he visited Paris, and became intimately acquainted with the celebrated Boileau. Upon his return to England, he was made a commissioner of the customs; and, on the accession of Queen Anne, through the interest of the lord-treasurer Godolphin, auditor of the imprests, a place of great pecuniary emolument. In 1705 he was chosen a member of parliament for Preston in Lancashire. He died at St. Alban's, November 13th, 1712, aged 44. Mr.

Maynwaring wasgreatly attached to Mrs. Oldfield, whose theatrical abilities at that time excited the admiration of the lovers of the drama; and by her he left an only son. Oldmixon, who published in 1715, in 8vo, the life and posthumous works of our author, affirms, that he "loved that lady for about eight or nine years before his death, and with a passion that could hardly have been stronger had it been both her and his first love." For Mrs. Oldfield he wrote many prologues and epilogues, and took infinite pains and delight in improving her talents for the stage. The elegance of his manners and taste, and his proficiency in the *belle lettres*, attracted many friends and admirers, and among these were Addison and Steele, the latter of whom dedicated to him the first volume of the Tatler. He was universally allowed, says the Biographia Britannica, to be the best critic of his times; and Mr. Egerton, in his Memoirs of Mrs. Oldfield, has declared, that his learning was without pedantry, his wit without affectation, his judgment without malice, his friendship without interest, his zeal without violence; in a word, he was the best subject, the best friend, the best relation, the best master, the best critic, and the best political writer in Great Britain. Though this be doubtless exaggerated praise, Mr. Maynwaring is entitled to most respectable distinction

for his good sense and moderation in politics, at a time when faction and party zeal ran with so headstrong a current. His Medleys are generally written with much strength of argument, and freedom from abuse. They were continued, with occasional assistance, until August 6th, 1711, extending to forty-five numbers, one of which was contributed by Steele, and another by Anthony Henley; and several were the composition of Mr. Oldmixon. After an interval of some months, they were resumed, and a new Medley appeared on the 3d of March, 1712, which, having likewise reached to forty-five numbers, finally expired on August 4th, 1712. A selection from the first Medley was published in 1789, by Mr. Nichols, together with the Lover, and Reader, of Steele.

19. THE OBSERVATOR. Though this political paper commenced many years anterior to the Tatler, it continued to exist until 1712; when an act of parliament, annexing a stamp of a half-penny to every half-sheet, effected its ruin. It was a weekly Essay, originally published by John Tutchin, who, for his participation in the rebellion of Monmouth, and for a defence of that chieftain, which he subsequently printed, was sentenced by Jefferies to be whipped through several towns in the west. The sentence was

carried into execution with so much severity, that the unfortunate man absolutely petitioned James II. to be hanged. Dying in September, 1707, his paper was continued by other hands, but never merited or acquired much celebrity. Gay, in May, 1711, thus notices it, "The Observator, since our party struggles have run so high, is much mended for the better; which is imputed to the charitable assistance of some outlying friends." And Swift, in his journal to Stella, dated August 7th, 1712, has exultingly recorded its extinction. "Do you know that Grub-street is dead and gone last week? No more ghosts or murders now for love or money. I plied it pretty close the last fortnight, and published at least seven papers of my own, besides some of other people's; but now every single half-sheet pays a half-penny to the Queen. The Observator is fallen."

20. THE RAMBLER. It is probable, from circumstances which we shall afterwards have occasion to mention, that Dr. Johnson was ignorant of this anticipation of title. The first Rambler appeared in 1712, but only one number has escaped the ravages of time; this is in the British Museum, and does not appear, observes the annotator on the Tatler, inferior to any of the earlier

imitations of the Tatler, &c. in respect of wit, humour, or literary composition.* To what extent this paper was carried is unknown.

21. The Lay Monastery. Sir Richard Blackmore, the chief author of this production, and a most indefatigable writer, was the son of an Attorney in the county of Wiltshire, and, after the usual routine of education, was in 1668 entered at Edmund Hall, Oxford. He took his degree of M. A. in this university, in 1676, where he resided thirteen years; at the expiration of which period, it is probable, that for a short time he assumed the employment of a school-master. He soon, however, relinquished this occupation for the study of physic,† and visiting the continent, graduated at Padua. After a tour of eighteen months, he returned to his native

* Tatler of 1797, 8vo, vol. 4, p. 262, 263.

† The following severe lines, alluding to Sir Richard's two professional employments, are, in Cibber's Lives of the Poets, ascribed to Dr. James Drake, the author of the Anthropologia Nova.

By nature form'd, by want a pedant made,
Blackmore at first set up the whipping trade:
Next quack commenc'd; then fierce with pride he swore,
That tooth-ach, gout, and corns, should be no more.
In vain his drugs, as well as birch he tried,
His boys grew blockheads, and his patients died.

country, and, commencing practice in London, was created a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1687. Having acquired considerable celebrity in his profession, he had the honour, in 1697, of being appointed physician in ordinary to King William; this was speedily followed by the rank of Knighthood; and when Queen Anne ascended the throne, he was also nominated one of her physicians, and continued to officiate as such for several years. He died in October, 1729, after a long life of industry, piety, and unblemished morality.

The numerous compositions of Sir Richard Blackmore, may be arranged under the heads of *medical*, *poetical*, *theological*, and *miscellaneous*. They are now, in a great measure, and perhaps not undeservedly, neglected; though, as they were uniformly written in support of virtue and moral order, and occasionally display passages of some literary merit, they were by no means proper subjects for the ridicule and abuse with which they were indiscriminately overwhelmed. He acquired, however, no inconsiderable share of fame by his first epic production, entitled Prince Arthur, a poem which passed through three editions in two years, could boast of Locke and Molyneux among the number of its admirers, and which strongly excited the attention of the critics.

Unhappily, the encouragement of the public given to this first effort, stimulated Sir Richard to further exertions, and by the year 1723, he had produced three more bulky epics, King Arthur, Eliza, and Alfred; the four poems including no less than forty-four books. With the mediocrity and perseverance of our author, the world, however, soon grew satiated, and his heroes were scarcely ushered into life, before they began to exhibit symptoms of dissolution. Yet, notwithstanding the length of these poetical flights, Sir Richard found time for a vast variety of other excursions into the regions of Parnassus; and among these, for one on which his reputation, as a disciple of the Muses, seems now solely to rest. In 1712 appeared his *Creation, a philosophical poem* in seven books, of which both the matter and stile have been highly commended by Addison and Johnson; the latter affirming, that "this poem, if he had written nothing else, would have transmitted him to posterity among the first favourites of the English muse."* To this opinion few will probably assent; and though the recommendation of the Doctor has introduced this work into the body of our English Poetry, we may venture to predict that it will not long maintain its station. Splendid as the subject is, the

* Lives of the Poets.

sentiments and imagery are trite, and the versification insufferably tedious and languid.

Of the prose of Blackmore, his Essays and the *Lay Monastery* are the best. This last production was intended as a sequel to the Spectators, the seventh volume of which was at that time supposed to have closed the undertaking. It was originally published in single papers, under the title of the *Lay Monk*, and the first number appeared on November 16th, 1713. It was presented to the public thrice a week, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and, having reached forty numbers, expired on February 15th, 1714. It was re-published the same year in one volume, and under its present title, and passed through a second edition, which now lies before me, in 1727. Sir Richard was assisted in this work by Mr. Hughes, who wrote all the Friday's papers.

The *Lay Monastery*, though never popular, contains some essays of no inconsiderable merit, and, in imitation of the Spectator, has adopted a dramatic plan, for the purpose of binding the parts into a whole; an advantage of which, unfortunately, few periodical papers have since availed themselves. That Blackmore very justly appreciated the value of this resource, and had a correct idea of the peculiar laws of periodical composition, as exemplified in the Spectator, is

strikingly evident from the first paragraph of his preface. "The world," says he, "has been obliged to an author of distinguished merit, now living, for having been the inventor of a manner of writing, no less entertaining than any which had been established by the practice of the most celebrated antients. The form into which the best writer among the Romans generally chose to cast his thoughts, was that of dialogue, or of conversations related, in which the persons introduced were all philosophers, and the discourses wholly serious; yet this he borrowed from Plato and others of the Greeks whom he professed to imitate. But the introducing a set of persons of different humours and characters, acting on some imaginary occasion which might draw out a variety of incidents and discourses, and in which every paper should be an entire piece, at the same time that it is a part of the whole, is the invention of the writer already mentioned, who seems at once to have introduced it, and carried it to perfection."

In conformity with the approbation expressed in this passage, Sir Richard has formed a club consisting of six characters, who, retiring to a house in the country, assemble twice a week for the purpose of reading and discussing the merits of various essays, of their own composition, on

literature and manners. This select fraternity consists of a Mr. Johnson, a gentleman of great genius, erudition, and accomplishments; of Dr. Lacon, a physician; of Sir Eustace Locker, whose favourite studies are metaphysics and theology; of Sir Arthur Wimbleton, a widower, a man of uncommon beneficence and humanity; of Ned Freeman, a compound of gallantry, good humour, and classical elegance; and of Mr. Ravenscroft, the secretary, the history of whose eventful life is given in the third number.

Of these personages, five owe their existence to Sir Richard Blackmore; and the sixth, the portrait of Ned Freeman, is the conception of Mr. Hughes. They are supported with consistency and spirit; and it was the opinion of Hughes, that, had not Sir Richard been unexpectedly diverted from the prosecution of the plan, the work would have gained its share of popularity, and might have been continued with credit and advantage to its authors. The style is, in several of the papers, elegant and correct, and the subject-matter occasionally interesting. Two Essays, N° 31 and 32, contain an ingenious parallel between poetry and painting; they are, being Monday and Wednesday papers, the composition of Sir Richard; and, as specimens of his diction

and manner, I shall select, from the first of them a couple of passages.

"With what wonderful success has nature painted all the scenes of this wide theatre, the world! How masterly are her designs, how strong and bold her draughts, how delicate her touches, and how rich and beautiful is her colouring! It is with inimitable skill that she manages and proportions her lights and shades, and mixes and works in her colours; the gardens smile with her fruits of different dye, and the verdure of the fields is beautifully varied by different flowers. What pencil can express the glowing blushes of the rose, the glossy white of the lily, or the rich crimson of the amaranth? What master can delineate the changeable colours in the neck of the dove, and in the tail of the peacock, arising from the rays of light glancing and playing among their feathers?"

"As the epic and tragic poets by the warm ideas they convey, touch all the springs and movements of our minds, and take possession of our hearts, by propagating their own passions, and transmitting their very souls into our bosoms; so the masters of the great manner in painting history, who express in their pieces great design, generous sentiments, and the dignity of the

sublime style, animate their canvas with the most lively and active passions. All the emotions of the heart appear in the faces of their figures with the utmost spirit and vivacity: the whole soul is collected and exerted in the eyes, which sometimes flash with fury, and sometimes are transported with joy, or uplifted with admiration; in one piece they are filled with horror and consternation, and at another they melt with tender affection.

"What poetical design and description, what an epic imagination does Raphael show in his celebrated piece of *Constantine and Maxentius!* And what masterly and admirable painting does Virgil express, when he describes the battle of the Latins and the Trojans."

22. THE MERCATOR, OR COMMERCE RETRIEVED. So general had become the taste for periodical composition, that even subjects of a commercial as well as a political nature, were conceived capable of being published to advantage in this form. Mercator appeared in 1713, and was soon followed by

23. THE BRITISH MERCHANT, OR COMMERCE PRESERVED. Both these papers are noticed in the following advertisement at the close of N° 129 of the Guardian, dated August 8th, 1713. "This day is published, The British Merchant, or Commerce Preserved, N° 1, to be

published every Tuesday and Friday, in answer to the Mercator, or Commerce Retrieved." It cannot be supposed, that productions of this kind would long survive the occasion which gave them birth; and it is probable, that Mercator and The British Merchant can now only be said to have once existed.

24. THE RHAPSODY.

25. THE HISTORIAN. Of these papers, over which time seems to have thrown nearly an impenetrable veil, I know nothing more than that it is with some probability we assign their publication to the period under discussion; their titles lead in some degree to a general conception of their contents.

26. THE HIGH GERMAN DOCTOR. This tissue of nonsense and political abuse was the production of one Philip Horneck, who is very deservedly stigmatized in the Dunciad of Pope. It consists of one hundred numbers, which were published twice a week; the first being dated May 4th, 1714, and the last May 12th, 1715. They were collected in 2 vols. 12mo, of which the first was published in 1715, and the second in 1719. After much loss of time in perusing this mass of ribaldry and inanity, I can safely declare that there is not a single paragraph in the work which merits preservation.

It should not be forgotten, that during a great part of the five years which this sketch embraces, three periodical papers, which were noticed in our first Essay illustrative of the Tatler, &c. continued to meet the public eye; the *Rehearsal* of Leslie, the *British Apollo*, and the *Review* of De Foe; the first expired in 1711, the second in the same year, and the third in 1713.

Such and so numerous were the periodical compositions that attempted to imitate and to rival the essays of Steele and Addison, whilst the town was yet daily receiving their elegant contributions. That they completely failed in their design, is evident from the circumstance, that not one of them, with the exception of the Lay Monastery, can be read with any degree of interest or pleasure; and even this small volume is so neglected and obscure, that it is now procured with much difficulty.

It was a step, indeed, fatal to the reputation and longevity of the greater number of the authors of these productions, that, when they found themselves incompetent to contend with their prototypes in wit, humour, or literature, they endeavoured to attract attention by depreciating and abusing what they could not imitate, and by presenting a copy which retained all the defects

in caricature, and scarcely any of the beauties of the original.

Of this charge we have sufficient proof from an appeal to their contemporaries; one of whom, in an Essay on the Present State of Wit, written in 1711, has remarked, that "they seemed at first to think that what was only the garnish of the former Tatlers, was that which recommended them, and not those substantial entertainments which they every where abound in.

"Accordingly, they were continually talking of their maid, night-cap, spectacles, and Charles Lillie. However, there were, now and then, some faint endeavours at humour, and sparks of wit, which the town, for want of better entertainment, was content to hunt after, through a heap of impertinencies: but even those are at present become wholly invisible, and quite swallowed up in the blaze of the Spectator.—

"They found the new Spectator come on like a torrent, and sweep away all before him; they despaired ever to equal him;—and, therefore, rather chose to fall on the author, and to call out for help to all good christians, by assuring them again and again, that they were the first original, true, and undisputed Isaac Bickerstaff." *

To imitate the Tatler in its exterior, in its form

* Swift's Works by Nichols, 8vo ed. vol. 18, p. 40 and 41.

and subdivisions, as it originally commenced, was a task which might be executed by the most inferior writers; and consequently, Tatlers, addressed rather to the eye than to the understanding, inundated the press; to catch, however, the spirit which so abundantly animated the greater, and especially the latter, portion of this work, was an achievement beyond their strength, and, of course, the public soon justly consigned such imitators to oblivion.

PART I.

ESSAY II.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PERIODICAL PAPERS WHICH WERE WRITTEN BETWEEN THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTH VOLUME OF THE SPECTATOR, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE RAMBLER; WITH SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON THEIR TENDENCY AND COMPLECTION.

If so arduous proved the attempt to transplant the graces of the Tatler, the difficulty appeared tenfold enhanced when the Spectator became the object of rivalry; and though its imitators have been infinitely more numerous and respectable than were those of the Tatler, it may justly be said, that, if a few have made a near approach to its merits and construction, not one has altogether equalled its great and varied excellence.

From the close of the eighth volume of the Spectator on December 20th, 1714, to the appearance of the Rambler in 1750, we possess a long

and unbroken catalogue of periodical papers. Of these some are respectable, and written on topics embracing general literature and manners; several are political, and many trifling and jejune. The first, in order of time, was an attempt to continue the Spectator, both in title and form; it was therefore termed

1. SPECTATOR, VOLUME NINTH AND LAST. This work, which we formerly had occasion to mention and condemn, was published twice a week, commencing on January 3d, 1715, and terminating with the sixty-first number on August 3d of the same year. It was conducted by a Mr. William Bond, whose signature is affixed to a dedication to the Viscountess Falconberg; in which, whilst acknowledging the contributions of his friends, he remarks, "two excellent ones (essays) were presented me by a friend, celebrated for his vast genius, and who furnished (I won't say the *former* Spectators, but) the *Tatlers* with a better fame than they would, perhaps, have obtained, if he had not lent his hand, and scattered life and lustre through these loose pages.—I fear that these may be the only witty pieces in the whole set." I apprehend that this boast, which appears intended to insinuate that Dr. Swift had afforded his assistance, must be considered as a mere *vox et præterea nihil;* for, after a thorough

investigation, I have been utterly disappointed in discovering a single paper in the smallest degree entitled to the appellation of witty. Bond wrote a poem in ridicule of Mr. Pope, and was rewarded, for his temerity, with a niche in the Dunciad.

2. THE CENSOR. To the laborious Mr. Lewis Theobald are we to ascribe the pages of the Censor. This gentleman was born at Sittingbourn in Kent, and, having received a grammatical education at Isleworth in Middlesex, applied himself to his father's profession, which was that of the Law. This, however, he soon relinquished to become a poet, an essayist, and an editor; in the first of these departments he early published a pamphlet called the Cave of Poverty, and which Bond, in Nos. 23 and 25 of his Spectator, has loaded with ridiculous and hyperbolical praise.

To this succeeded, in the same year, the first volume of the Censor, the numbers of which originally appeared in Mist's Weekly Journal, a mode of publication to which Pope alludes in the following lines from the quarto edition of the Dunciad in 1728.

> But what can I? my Flaccus cast aside,
> Take up the Attorney's (once my better) guide?
> Or rob the Roman geese of all their glories,
> And save the state by cackling to the Tories?
> Yes, to my Country I my pen consign,
> Yes, from this moment, mighty *Mist!* am thine.

After some abortive efforts in dramatic poetry, one of which, *The Double Falsehood*, he endeavoured to impose upon the public as a production of Shakspeare, our author fortunately directed his talents into their proper channel, and by becoming the editor of our great dramatic poet, conferred an obligation of some weight upon the numerous admirers of the illustrious bard. It was in the year 1726 that he first entered upon the subject, by publishing a pamphlet entitled "Shakspeare Restored," in which his vanity led him to affirm "that what care might for the future be taken either by Mr. Pope, or any other assistants, he would give above five hundred emendations that would escape them all;" an assertion that gave just offence to Mr. Pope, and which occasioned the immediate elevation of Mr. Theobald to the honours of the Hero of the Dunciad; a station, however, from which he was soon after hurled, to make way for the enthronement of Cibber.

The year 1733 ushered in our author's Shakspeare in eight volumes; a work which, notwithstanding the abuse of Pope and Warburton, merited and acquired much reputation: it is indeed, superior to any preceding attempt of the kind, and has laid a firm foundation, by pointing out the proper path of illustration, for the valuable

commentaries of Johnson and of Steevens. Theobald survived this, his best, undertaking nine years, closing in 1742 a life of poverty and literary labour.

The first number of the *Censor* appeared in Mist's Journal on April 11th, 1715; and it was continued thrice a week, without intermission, until thirty numbers had been published; they were then collected into a volume, in the preface to which Theobald has remarked, that his papers "followed too close upon the heels of the inimitable SPECTATOR, whose excellent vein of good sense, spirit, wit, and humour, made that PAPER the entertainment of all the gay, polite, and virtuous part of mankind. It was a hard task," he proceeds, "to come after such a writer, and avoid striking into the paths he had trod; and still a harder, to invent new subjects, and work upon them with any degree of the same genius and delicacy. This the publishers of the Censor knew so well, that they were obliged to give a new turn both of character and dress to their performances.

"Another disadvantage was, the vast multitude of papers that pretended to give an equal diversion to the town; which, though they died soon, and left no memory behind them, yet found readers heavy enough to sympathize with their dullness. That period of time may be well called

the *age of counsellors*, when every blockhead who could write his own name attempted to inform and amuse the public." After an interval of about a year and a half the Censor was resumed thrice a week on January 1st, 1717, and closed, after completing the ninety-sixth number, on June 1st, 1717; when the whole was thrown into three volumes.

Theobald discovered much want of judgment in attributing to his assumed character of Censor talents of the highest order, his very first paragraph informing us that he was lineally descended from *Benjamin Johnson* of surly memory, whose name, as well as *a considerable portion of his spirit*, he was heir to. Such a declaration excited expectations which were certainly by no means gratified; for though the work be not destitute of merit, it is far from supporting any claim to the pedigree which he chose to adopt. The rough and unsparing invective, too, which pervades many of its parts, procured him several bitter enemies, and among these was the critic Dennis, who, being represented in N° 33, under the name of *Furius*, as "an object rather of pity, than that which he daily provokes, laughter and contempt," retorted in terms to which the language of Theobald is mildness itself; "there is," says he, in his Remarks on Pope's

Homer, " a notorious idiot, one hight Whacum; who, from an under-spur-leather to the law, is become an understrapper to the play-house, who has lately burlesqued the Metamorphoses of Ovid, by a vile translation, &c. The fellow is concerned in an impertinent paper called the Censor."

To the style in which the Censor is composed no praise is due; it is too often bald, vulgar, and ungrammatical; there are, however, a few papers which are worthy of being rescued from oblivion; and among these I would particularly distinguish N° 60 on the Prometheus of Æschylus, N° 83 on Hope, and N° 84 on Sleep.

It is some, though not an unequivocal proof of merit, that, of the numerous periodical papers which were published during the era under consideration, when Theobald produced his essays, the Censor may still be procured by research; the rest, whose mere names I have only to produce, no enquiry on my part has yet been able to detect; they are now, as the Editor of the Tatler remarks, seen but seldom, and seldomer read. The following list, if not complete, is sufficiently extensive to shew how very general this mode of publication had become, even in the first few years after the close of the Spectator.

3. The Miscellany.

4. THE HERMIT.

5. THE SURPRIZE.

6. THE SILENT MONITOR.

7. THE INQUISITOR.

8. THE PILGRIM.

9. THE RESTORER.

10. THE INSTRUCTOR.

11. THE GRUMBLER. This, which was a weekly paper, was probably the production of Ducket, and is alluded to in the following lines of the quarto edition of the Dunciad, 1728:

> Behold yon pair in strict embraces join'd;
> How like in manners, and how like in mind!
> Fam'd for good nature *Burnet* and for truth,
> *Ducket* for pious passion to the youth:
> Equal in wit, and equally polite,
> Shall this a Pasquin, that a *Grumbler* write. *

From this barren catalogue, we now turn to a paper of a superior kind, and which, though not included, as a whole, in the number of our classical productions, yet possesses several essays which would confer honour on any work; it was conducted by Ambrose Phillips, and entitled,

12. THE FREETHINKER. Phillips, of whose

* The author of these sketches would be happy to receive any information relative to these almost forgotten papers, through the medium of the Gentleman's, or any other respectable Magazine.

life we have already given a sketch, as a contributor to the Spectator, was powerfully aided in the prosecution of the Freethinker by some of the most respectable characters in the kingdom; by *Boulter*, Archbishop of Armagh; by *Pearce*, Bishop of Rochester; and by the *Right Hon. Richard West*, Lord Chancellor of Ireland. To these may be added the *Rev. George Stubbs*, the *Rev. Gilbert Burnet*, and the *Rev. Henry Steevens*.

Of these contributors by far the most considerable was Mr. Stubbs, many of the best papers in the collection being of his composition. He was Rector of Granville in Dorsetshire, and published, in the London Journal of 1724, and afterwards separately in octavo, an interesting little work under the title of "A new Adventure of Telemachus," intended as an illustration of the principles of genuine liberty and free government. He was the author also of "A Dialogue on Beauty," in imitation of the style and manner of Socrates, and of a translation of Madame Sevigne's Letters. He was gifted with taste and genius, but secluded and reserved in his life and manners.

The Freethinker began its career on Monday, March 24th, 1718; was published twice a week, and terminated with the one hundred and

fifty-ninth paper, on Monday, September 28th, 1719, forming three volumes duodecimo, the second edition of which appeared in 1733.

The great object of these essays is, to correct the prejudices and mistakes which exist in religion, general politics, and literature; and, consequently, a large portion of the work is of a serious and argumentative kind. The observations on knowledge and learning, which occupy Nos. 85, 87, 89, 91, 111, 113, 115, and 117, are peculiarly worthy of attention. The essay in N° 114, on the shortness and vanity of life, is from the pen of Dr. Pearce, and is highly estimable for its invention and morality.

To mitigate the severity, however, attendant on such topics, and to superadd the charm of variety, the authors of the Freethinker have occasionally interspersed several pieces of wit, humour, and imagination; nor are the interests, the manners, and conduct of the fair sex, by any means forgotten; indeed, the work is dedicated to the ladies of Great Britain, and they will find in its pages many pertinent and useful remarks. Of the papers which are devoted to fiction, the "Winter Evening Tales" in Nos. 80, 84, 92, 109, and 110, display a happy combination of fancy and precept; and the story of Cha-Abbas, King of Persia, in Nos. 128 and 129, is, in a high

degree, pleasing, pathetic, and instructive. The diction usually employed by the Freethinker is easy and perspicuous; and I am persuaded that a very interesting selection might be made from his volumes.

13. THE PATRICIAN. The first number of this political paper was printed on March 21st, 1719; it was written as an answer to the *Plebeian* of Sir Richard Steele, and was intended to have been continued weekly. It reached, however, but four numbers, and expired on April 11th, 1719. The first number was republished by Mr. Nichols in 1790, in an octavo edition of the Town Talk, &c. &c. of Steele.

14. THE MODERATOR. In the volume just mentioned, Mr. Nichols has given the only number of this work which was printed. It was meant to steer between the contending parties on the celebrated Peerage Bill; it appeared on April 4th, 1719, and went through a second edition on November 28th of the same year.

15. THE MANUFACTURER.

16. THE BRITISH MERCHANT.

17. THE WEAVER. These three periodical papers owe their origin to a dispute between the dealers in the woollen and calico manufactures. The first appeared on October 30th, 1719, under the title of "The Manufacturer, or British

Trade truly stated;" wherein the case of the weavers, and the wearing of calicoes, are considered; to be continued every Wednesday and Friday. The second began to be published on November 10th, 1719, in answer to the Manufacturer, and was printed every Tuesday; and the third, which professed to consider the state of our home-manufactures, followed on November 23d, 1719, and likewise issued from the press weekly. The subject seemed strongly to have arrested the public attention, and was at length noticed by the patriotic pen of Sir Richard Steele, who, as we have already recorded in his life, presented the world with a paper in support of the woollen trade, under the appellation of the *Spinster*. The *British Merchant* was, it is probable, continued for nearly two years, as it appears to have attained in 1721 to the bulk of three volumes duodecimo.

18. The British Harlequin. Of this insignificant paper the first number was published on January 5th or 6th, 1719-20; the second came out on January 12th, wherein, says the title-page, Masquerades are defended against the *Free-thinker*, and Free-thinker Extraordinary, and every other sour old fellow. It was printed weekly for a short period, and then deservedly dropped into oblivion.

19. THE INDEPENDENT WHIG. A political paper conducted by Gordon and Trenchard, of whom we shall shortly have occasion to speak, in order to oppose the High-Church party. It was continued by Gordon after Trenchard's death, commenced on January 20th, 1719-20, and terminated on January 4th, 1720-1, having extended to fifty-three numbers. It has passed through a second edition, and is written with a considerable degree of spirit.

20. THE ANTI-THEATRE. The purport of this publication, which consists of fifteen numbers, was, to invalidate the sentiments and opinions of Sir Richard Steele, in his popular paper entitled '*The Theatre*,' written, as he expresses it, for the preservation and improvement of the *English* Theatre.* The first number, of which all but one paragraph has perished, was published on February 15th, 1719-20, and the last on April 4th, 1720. The author, who assumes the name of Sir John Falstaffe, has conducted the controversy, as he promised in his introductory essay, with civility and good manners; a mode of treatment which to Steele, who had been grossly abused on this very subject by the implacable Dennis, was a pleasing novelty. In argument and composition, however, the

* Theatre, No. 1.

Anti-Theatres are much inferior to the work of Steele.

21. THE MUSES' GAZETTE. This production, of which one principal object was the ridicule of Steele and Cibber, made its first appearance on March 12th, 1719-20, in Applebee's Original Weekly Journal. N° 8, which has been re-published by Mr. Nichols, is dated April 20th, 1720. It was in every respect a despicable undertaking, and soon ceased to exist.

22. CATO'S LETTERS. These Letters, or Essays, on Liberty civil or religious, were published periodically in the "London" and afterwards in the "British Journal," and commenced in November, 1720. They were continued very successfully for nearly three years, and were then collected into four volumes 12mo. They are the effusions of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. The former, who was born in 1669, had a liberal education, and was intended for the practice of the law; but being appointed, during the reign of King William, a commissioner of the forfeited estates in Ireland, and inheriting a good fortune from his uncle, which he greatly increased by marriage, he relinquished his profession, and turned his attention to the study of politics. In this department he early signalized himself by two pamphlets against standing armies, printed

in 1697 and 1698; and becoming acquainted with Gordon, who had embarked in the Bangorian controversy, he took him into his house as an amanuensis, and shortly afterwards admitted him as a coadjutor in the conduct and composition of Cato's Letters. Mr. Trenchard was a man of a vigorous mind, and strict integrity; he was a zealous and patriotic Whig, and was, for many years, a member of parliament for Taunton, in Somersetshire. He died in 1723.

His friend, Mr. Gordon, was a native of Kircudbright in Scotland, and, after an academical education in his own country, fixed in London as a teacher of the learned languages. The factious politics of the age, however, diverted his attention, for a time, from classical pursuits, and he enlisted under the banners of the Earl of Oxford. Soon after this event, he gained the esteem and patronage of Mr. Trenchard, by his two pamphlets in defence of Bishop Hoadley; and having shewn his abilities as a polemic writer in Cato's Letters, and the Independent Whig, Sir Robert Walpole, on the death of Mr. Trenchard, appointed him first commissioner of the wine-licences, and engaged his pen in support of government. In 1739, Mr. Gordon published a translation of Tacitus, and in 1743 a version of Sallust. They are both literally faithful to their respective

originals, and are illustrated by discourses relative to each author, which display erudition; but the style, owing to an injudicious attempt to copy the conciseness of the Latin Historians, is peculiarly harsh and inverted. They are now superseded by the more elegant versions of Murphy and Steuart. Our author married, for his second wife, the widow of Mr. Trenchard; and by her he had several children. He died July 28th, 1750, at the age of sixty-six.

The best production of these writers was certainly the Letters of Cato, which, for the period they were published in, are singularly impartial. The language is clear and nervous, though sometimes coarse; and the principles of liberty are supported with a bold and manly spirit, and with no subserviency to faction or cabal. The fourth edition of Cato's Letters was printed in 1737, with a preface by Gordon.

23. Terræ Filius. To Nicholas Amhurst is to be ascribed this witty but intemperate work. Mr. Amhurst was a native of Marden, in Kent, and was educated at Merchant-Taylor's school in London. From this seminary he was sent to St. John's College, Oxford; where, owing to his irregularity and misconduct, he gave great offence to the head of the College, and was ultimately expelled. His resentment on this occasion was

singularly violent: he published several pieces, in prose and verse, and among these the Terræ Filius, reflecting strongly on the discipline of the University, and on the characters of its members.

Our author's expulsion took place about the year 1720, and, shortly after this event, he fixed in London, where he supported himself by the labours of his pen. He was a zealous Whig, and an inveterate enemy to the clergy of high-church principles; he entered with alacrity, therefore, into a warfare against priestly power and tory politics; his "Convocation," a poem in five cantos, was written in defence of Bishop Hoadley; and he conducted "The Craftsman," with uncommon popularity and success, in opposition to the measures of Sir Robert Walpole. He was, nevertheless, cruelly neglected by his party, when, in the year 1742, they were admitted into power; an instance of ingratitude which so affected his health and spirits, that he survived the shock but a few months, and expired at Twickenham on April 27th, 1742, a martyr to his dependence on the promises of the great. "Poor Amhurst!" exclaims his friend Mr. Ralph, "after having been the drudge of his party for the best part of twenty years together, was as much forgotten in the famous compromise of 1742, as if he had never been born! and when he died of

what is called a broken heart, which happened within a few months afterwards, became indebted to the charity of his very Bookseller for a grave; not to be traced *now*, because *then* no otherwise to be distinguished, than by the freshness of the turf, borrowed from the next common to cover it." This worthy bookseller was Mr. Richard Franklin, of Russel-street, Covent Garden, our author's printer and publisher. Mr. Amhurst was a man of powerful talents, but of strong passions; his imprudencies were many, and his morals not correct; but nothing can justify the base desertion of his employers, who ascended to power through the medium of his exertions.

The *Terræ Filius* is a sharp and too frequently a virulent satire on the statutes, the manners, and the politics of the University of Oxford: many faults and glaring inconsistencies are pointed out; but mixed with so much personal invective, and gross scurrility, as to defeat the salutary purposes which the author might have in view. For the title which he has given to his paper he thus accounts in his first number. "It has till of late," says he, "been a custom, from time immemorial, for one of our family, who was called Terræ Filius, to mount the *Rostrum* at *Oxford* at certain seasons, and divert an innumerable crowd of spectators, who flocked thither to hear him

from all parts, with a merry oration in the *Fescennine* manner, interspersed with secret history, raillery, and sarcasm, as the occasions of the times supplied him with matter. Something like this jovial solemnity were the famous *Saturnalian* feasts among the Romans." And in his second essay he declares, that he shall not confine himself to any particular method, "but shall be grave or whimsical, serious or ludicrous, prosaical or poetical, philosophical or satirical, argue or tell stories, weep over his subject, or laugh over it, be in humour or out of humour, according to whatever passion is uppermost in his breast." It must be conceded, that the character which he has chosen is not ill supported; there is much wit and humour in the work, with several curious anecdotes, and there is also a plentiful portion of the coarseness and vulgarity of the Saturnalia.* One great object of the work is, to reprobate the attachment of the University

* Nos. 15 and 16 of *Terræ Filius* contain a severe attack upon Mr. Warton, then professor of poetry, and father of the late Laureat, for preaching, as the author supposed, a masqued sermon in favour of the exiled family; and Nos. 25 and 26 exhibit a very ludicrous description of a poetical club and its laws, of which the poetical professor is constituted president. Mr. Warton was a worthy and amiable man, and these papers display in a striking light the virulence and exaggeration of Amhurst.

to the Stuarts, and to prove that his own persecution and expulsion originated from his zeal in support of the House of Hanover.

The *Terræ Filius* was published twice a week, commencing on Wednesday, January 11th, 1721, and concluding with the fiftieth number on Saturday, July 6th, of the same year. A second edition, now before me, appeared in 1726, in two vols. 12mo, with a preface; a dedication to Dr. Mather, President of Corpus Christi College, and Vice-Chancellor; and an Appendix, addressed to Dr. Newton, Principal of Hart-Hall, and occasioned by his book entitled University Education.

24. MIST'S JOURNAL, A SELECTION FROM. A re-publication of Essays which had originally been printed in a Newspaper with this title, and which was undertaken to oppose the government of George I, and the claims of the protestant succession. Some of these essays, which include manners as well as politics, possess merit; they form 2 vols. 12mo, and appeared in 1722.

25. PASQUIN. This paper, whose title is taken from the celebrated statue in Rome (Pasquino,) to which the people are accustomed to affix lampoons and satires, was written in defence of government. It started in January, 1723, was published twice a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays, and, about six months after its commencement,

entered into a controversy with the True Briton. Its literary merit is not great; and, being confined to temporary and political topics, it is now no longer remembered.

26. The True Briton. Of this publication, which was written in opposition to the measures of Administration, and in defence of Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, the profligate Duke of Wharton was the author. It displays abilities which might have been rendered serviceable to his country, but which debauchery, and want of all principle, either stifled or directed into a wrong channel. The True Briton was published twice a week, and several thousands of each number were regularly dispersed; it began on June 3d, 1723, and, having reached the seventy-fourth number, closed on February 17th, 1724. A portion of it has been re-printed in two volumes octavo.

27. The Humourist. The period to which these papers in their single state* ought to be ascribed, I am not able to ascertain. The first volume of my copy, which is in 12mo, and the third edition, is dated 1724; and the second owing to the encouragement which the forme collection had received, appeared in 1725. Th

* The author says in his preface, that they had alrea appeared abroad *singly*, and, being well received, t bookseller was encouraged to gather them into a volume

first volume is dedicated, in a humorous and satirical style, to the Man in the Moon, and the second to the Right Honourable James Lord Tyrawley and Killmain. They consist of seventy-seven essays, thirty-three in the first volume, and forty-four in the second, on a great variety of subjects. They are written with much vivacity, and a few might be selected which display considerable wit and humour; of this kind are "Travels made and performed from Exeter to London," vol. 2, page 47; and the Essay on "Modern Inventions," a satire on Quack Advertisements, vol. 2, p. 82. The style, however, of the Humourist is not only inelegant, but coarse, and loaded with vulgar and idiomatic expressions, and there is much ribaldry interspersed through its pages. In an essay on Coffee-Houses the author remarks, that "after the *Restoration*, the king, who brought back with him many of the manners of the *French* nation, insinuated the same conversible humour into his favourites and followers. There were several Coffee-Houses then erected, where assemblies of the *Literati* professed to meet; and *the Town had due notice given them*, at which hour the respective boards sat, to speak sentences, and say things worth the hearing. *John Dryden took his place very solemnly every evening at Will's, which is*

*remembered and duly honoured for his sake, to this day."** To whom we are indebted for this motley work I am, at present, totally ignorant.

28. THE PLAIN DEALER. The writers of this periodical paper were Aaron Hill and W. Bond. Aaron Hill was born in London on February 10th, 1685; and after his school education at Westminster, not being able, from the destitute state in which he was left by his father, to complete his studies at an university, he embraced the resolution of applying to his relation Lord Paget, then Ambassador at the Court of Constantinople. For this city, therefore, he embarked in 1700, and was fortunately well received by his Lordship, who procured him an able tutor, under whose directions he travelled through a great part of the East, visiting Egypt, Palestine, &c. He returned to England in 1703, in the Ambassador's suite; and, upon the death of Lord Paget, accompanied Sir William Wentworth, of Yorkshire, on a tour through Europe, which occupied nearly three years. Mr. Hill appeared before the public as an author in 1709, by publishing "A History of the Ottoman Empire," and "Camillus," a poem, a panegyric on the Earl of Peterborough, which obtained him the patronage of that nobleman. The succeeding year was

* Vol. 2, p. 185.

a most propitious period in our author's annals; he married a lady of great beauty, wealth, and accomplishments; was appointed manager of Drury Lane Theatre; wrote his first tragedy, entitled "Elfrid, or the Fair Inconstant," which he had written at the request of Booth, and produced an Opera at the Haymarket, called "Rinaldo," which was received with great applause. His prospects, however, soon clouded; a disagreement with the Duke of Kent, Lord Chamberlain, induced him, in a few months, to give up the management of the Theatre; and the failure of a scheme, for which he had obtained a patent in 1713, to make sweet oil from beech-nuts, involved him in heavy pecuniary losses. The spirit of projecting, indeed, seems, from this period, never to have deserted Hill; he undertook a plan, shortly after the ruin of his first attempt, for the establishment of a plantation in Georgia; and, in 1728, entered into a contract with the York Buildings Company in the Highlands of Scotland, for cutting timber upon their estates, and floating it down the river Spey; but these schemes, like the former, proved abortive. In the mean time he was equally industrious with his pen; in 1718, a poem, called "The Northern Star," in honour of Peter the Great, procured him a gold medal from the Empress Catherine; and

his politics, though but sparingly mingled with the "Plain Dealer," introduced him, most undeservedly, among the heroes of the Dunciad. It was in the province of a dramatic poet, however, that he was best known to his contemporaries; and in this, more as a translator than an original writer; his "Fall of Siam," performed in 1716, and his "Athelstan" in 1731, are now forgotten; but his adaptations from Voltaire, his "Zara," "Alzira," and "Merope," have great merit, and the first and third still keep possession of the stage.

The loss of his amiable and beloved wife, in 1731, was an irreparable shock; she had borne him nine children, and in her he had possessed a consolation in adversity however severe. He endeavoured to amuse his mind by literature, and to bury his sorrows in retirement: at Plaistow, in Essex, he composed most of his latter pieces; and in the dedication of his Merope to Lord Bolingbroke, thus pathetically paints his solitude and resignation, and his hopes of immortality:

Cover'd in Fortune's shade, I rest reclin'd,
My griefs all silent, and my joys resign'd;
With patient eye life's ev'ning gleam survey,
Nor shake th' out-hast'ning sands, nor bid them stay:
Yet, while from life my setting prospects fly,
Fain would my mind's weak offspring shun to die;
Fain would their hope some light through time explore,
The name's kind passport, when the man's no more.

Our author did not long survive the production of his Merope; he expired on February 8th, 1750, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey in the same grave with his wife.

Aaron Hill was a man of amiable manners and of great moral worth; but his wishes for the longevity of his mental offspring are not likely to be gratified. Many of his best pieces were collected, shortly after his death, in four volumes octavo; but they are little read, nor do they, with a few exceptions, rise much beyond mediocrity.*

It was unfortunate, that in writing the *Plain Dealer* he should have fixed upon a coadjutor so inferior to himself as Mr. Bond.† Notwithstanding this unhappy choice, it is, as a miscellaneous paper, the best that has come under our review since the Free-Thinker; and, though not worthy of re-publication as a whole, contains several essays from which both amusement and

* His Dramatic Works were collected in two volumes octavo, 1760.

† "The Plain Dealer," observes Dr. Johnson, "was a periodical paper written by Mr. Hill and Mr. Bond, whom Savage called the two contending powers of light and darkness. They wrote by turns each six essays; and the character of the work was observed regularly to rise in Mr. Hill's weeks, and fall in Mr. Bond's." Life of Savage. Note.

instruction may be derived. The preface is a critique on Essay-writing; and N° 1, dated March 23d, 1724, is occupied by the discussion of a party assembled to choose a proper name for the paper. As this task, which was a difficulty then, has been rendered still more laborious by the multitude of subsequent publications, it may not be superfluous to present my readers with the proposed list, which includes nine appellations; namely, *The Inquisitor; The Truth-Teller; The Secret; The Coquet; The Bagpipe; The Flute; The Good-Fellow; The Sweet-Heart;* and *The Whirligig.* The Plain Dealer was published twice a week, and was concluded on May 7th, 1725, having reached one hundred and seventeen numbers; it was re-printed in 1734, and forms two octavo volumes.

The thirtieth number of the Plain Dealer, which contains an eulogium on Inoculation, and on its benevolent introducer Lady Montague, gives a curious detail of the prejudices and opposition which it had to encounter. "With what violence and malice," remarks the author, "has it not been railed at, and opposed?—How many false affirmations have we seen, with unblushing boldness, insulting truth in our public newspapers!—Nay, the pulpits, too, have trembled under the zeal of *Reverend Railers*; who, in the holy blindness of

their passion, have shewn us *Job* upon his dunghill, *inoculated* for the *Small-Pox* by the Devil for his Surgeon.

"It has been represented as a *wilful murder*, a new and wicked presumption! an assault on the prerogative of Heaven, and a taking God's own work out of his hands, to be mended by man's arrogance.

"But the common arguments, however despicable, give me diversion and entertainment. When I hear a pious old woman wisely wondering, *what this world would come to!* and concluding her remarks with the great maxim of resignation, that *God's own time is best!* I compare this force of female reasoning, to the representation which, a late writer tells us, the old *Boyars*, or Grandees of *Russia*, gravely made to the present Czar, when he attempted a communication, by digging a canal, between the Volga and the Tanais. *The design*, they said, *was great*;—But they humbly conceived it *impious*:—For, *since God had made the rivers to run one way, man ought not to turn them another.*"

An opposition equally violent, though not founded upon reasoning quite so ludicrous, is, in the present day, formed against a still more salutary inoculation, that of the Cow-pox.

To every improvement, indeed, however great and important, there has usually been opposed a

host of prejudices, the removal of which requires considerable address, and much patience and perseverance. So incontrovertible, however, is now the nature of the evidence in support of vaccination, that it becomes an imperious duty on the part of government and individuals, to promote, to the utmost of their power, its extension and utility. One important step to this effect, the establishment of the Royal Jennerian Society, has already, under the sanction of the highest authority in the kingdom, been carried into execution. More, however, remains to be done before we can congratulate our country on the probability of beholding the complete extinction of variolous contagion. A *second*, and most powerful mean, would be, *the interdiction of the practice of inoculation for the Small-Pox throughout the British Empire;* a practice which, if not speedily superseded by authority, must necessarily, from the lingering prejudices of individuals, for a long period keep alive the seeds of a most loathsome and destructive plague. A *third*, and scarcely less effectual plan, would be, *an injunction of the Legislature on every clergyman, and on every sponsor at the font, to take care, both as a religious and moral duty, that every infant be protected from danger by immediate vaccination.**

* At Geneva this very plan has, for some time, I understand, been strictly enjoined.

These regulations, which with perfect ease and safety might be universally adopted, would speedily, and beyond the power of reversal, establish a preventive, which every fact and every experiment has proved to be as certain and salutary as the warmest wishes of humanity could either hope for or suggest.

As to individuals, whether we consider them as *christians*, as *men*, as *parents*, or as *members of society*, they are called upon by every consideration due to themselves, their children, and their friends, to embrace and circulate a blessing, which, from the evidence widely propagating in its favour, cannot *now* be neglected without a violation of piety, of sympathy, and affection.

29. The London Journal. The Journal was a species of newspaper, including letters and essays on every topic, but too frequently on controversial subjects. It was a great deterioration of the admirable plan of Steele and Addison, and, for a time, the town was deluged with these motley productions. Aaron Hill, in the preface to his Plain Dealer, speaking of the dramatic plan of the Spectator and Guardian, remarks, that "writing under an assumptive character was a fine improvement;" and he then proceeds to say, that "it must eternally please, if, as new matter is continually rising, some geniuses could be found

able to treat it in a manner equal to their predecessors. Though perhaps the stamp-act first, and then the rise and multiplication of *Weekly Journals*, are now such impediments to a fair hearing in this method, as almost amount to a prohibition of such essays for the future. The invention of *Weekly Journals* was," he observes, " owing to the *taste* which the town began to entertain from the writings of the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and others. *Small essays* were so much liked, that it was imagined worth while to put a little *wit*, and a great deal of *history*, in a large quantity of paper, and sell it for the same or a less price than the stamp-duty had raised the half-sheet treatise to.— The general way now of communicating our thoughts to the public, is, by distinct and unconnected letters to the author of this or that journal." The London Journal commenced about the year 1726, and its politics were in favour of government. It had been preceded by *Mist's Journal*, the *Daily Gazetteer*, and several others, and was succeeded by the *Weekly Medley*, and *Literary Journal* 1728, by the *British Journal* in 1731, by the *Weekly Register* 1731, by *Fog's Journal* in 1732, by *Read's Journal*, and by the *Weekly Miscellany* 1736. Of these Journals, therefore, as they are not the legitimate offspring of the periodical papers as established by Steele,

I shall take no further notice, except when a selection of essays shall have been published from their contents, and of which the immediately succeeding article is a specimen.

30. ESSAYS ON THE VICES AND FOLLIES OF THE TIMES. This volume is the production of Amhurst, the author of Terræ Filius, and consists of "select papers formerly published in *Pasquin* and the *London Journal*." It appeared in the year 1726.

31. THE CRAFTSMAN. Amhurst was, for several years, the principal conductor of this political paper, which commenced on December 5th, 1726. It was written to oppose the administration of Sir Robert Walpole, and he was assisted in the attack by very powerful coadjutors. "He was the able associate," remarks Davies, "of Bolingbroke and Pulteney in writing the celebrated weekly paper called *The Craftsman*. His abilities were unquestionable; he had almost as much wit, learning, and various knowledge, as his two partners; and when these great masters chose not to appear in public themselves, he supplied their places so well that his essays were often ascribed to them."* Such was the popularity of these essays, and such the indignation of the country against the measures of Walpole,

* Lord Chesterfield's characters reviewed, p. 42.

that ten or twelve thousand were frequently sold in a day. A complete set of the Craftsman forms fourteen volumes duodecimo.

32. THE INTELLIGENCER. Dr. Thomas Sheridan, the chief author of this work, was a native of the county of Cavan in Ireland, and born about 1684. Though his parents were not able, from their narrow circumstances, to afford him the benefit of a liberal education, he had fortunately that great advantage conferred upon him by the generosity of a friend to the family, who, perceiving in young Sheridan indications of uncommon ability, sent him to Trinity College, Dublin, and supported him there during the necessary period of education. At this university he took his Doctor's degree, entered into holy orders, and shortly afterwards established a school at Dublin, which, for several years, was esteemed the first in the kingdom. His intimacy with Swift, which commenced soon after the Dean's settlement in Ireland, might, had he possessed common prudence and economy, have been of essential service to him; but carelessness and extravagance were the rocks on which Sheridan's fortunes were continually wrecked. He had no sooner obtained a living from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to whom he had been appointed chaplain, and which was meant but as an earnest of

future promotion, than his inadvertency destroyed all his hopes of subsequent preferment. On going to be inducted into his living in the South of Ireland, he was requested, by Archdeacon Russel, of Cork, to preach for him on the following Sunday. The day happened to be the anniversary of the Hanoverian accession to the crown of Great Britain; and the Doctor, not recollecting the circumstance, unfortunately pitched upon a sermon with the following text, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." The clamour occasioned by this unhappy choice, notwithstanding the discourse was altogether free from a political tendency, proved so great, that he was ultimately erased from the chaplains' list, and ordered to appear no more at the castle.

Though the Doctor had thus, to use Swift's phrase, "shot his own fortune dead by one single text," he was nevertheless indebted to the accident for a considerable addition to his property; for the Archdeacon, considering himself, by his request, as in some measure instrumental to the ruin of Sheridan's expectations in the church, made over to him, with unparalleled generosity, by a deed of gift, the manor of Drumlane in the county of Cavan, the clear rent of which amounted to two hundred and fifty pounds per annum.

Dr. Sheridan had now an income arising from

his landed property, his living, and his school, of not less than twelve hundred pounds a year; a fortune which should have exempted him from the possibility of want; but such was his prodigality, and his love of company, that his school gradually decreased; he was compelled to mortgage his land, and, to add to his difficulties, he foolishly exchanged his living in the county of Cork, worth nearly one hundred and fifty pounds a year, for one at Dunboyne, within a few miles of Dublin, whose value did not exceed eighty pounds per annum. This he again gave up, in a short time, for the free-school of Cavan; but, finding the situation unhealthy, he sold the school for four hundred pounds, and, after a residence of two years, returned to Dublin, in the neighbourhood of which he soon after died of a polypus in the heart. He was apprised of the nature of his complaint, and of the probability of his sudden death, by his physician Dr. Helsham, who advised him instantly to settle his affairs. He adopted the advice, and having made his will on September 10th, 1738, in his fifty-fifth year, he appeared afterwards singularly cheerful. He dined that day in great spirits, with a few friends; one of whom remarking that the wind was easterly, the Doctor exclaimed, "let it blow east, west, north, or south, the immortal soul will take its

flight to the destined point," and immediately falling back in his chair, expired without a groan or a struggle.

Dr. Sheridan was an excellent classical scholar, and a very worthy man; for, though extravagant, he was never vicious. Being totally ignorant of the world, he was the perpetual dupe of the artful and designing; and having no value for money, he had consequently no regard for economy. He was generous, charitable, and of an independent spirit; a most affectionate friend, and, as a companion, unrivalled for wit, humour, and taste.

The Intelligencer was published weekly in Dublin, in the years 1728 and 1729. It is a miscellaneous paper, and had the occasional assistance of Dr. Swift. In the first number, which was written by the Dean, we meet with the following account of the object and plan of these essays. "There is a society," he observes, "lately established, who, at great expence, have erected an office of intelligence, from which they are to receive weekly information of all important events and singularities which this famous metropolis can furnish. Strict injunctions are given to have the truest information; in order to which, certain qualified persons are employed to attend upon duty at their several posts; some at the play-house, others in churches; some at balls,

assemblies, coffee-houses, and meetings for quadrille; some at the several courts of justice, both spiritual and temporal; some at the college, some upon my lord mayor and aldermen in their public affairs; lastly, some to converse with favourite chambermaids, and to frequent those ale-houses and brandy-shops where the footmen of great families meet in a morning; only the barracks and parliament-house are excepted, because we have yet found no *enfans perdus* bold enough to venture their persons at either. Out of these and some other store-houses we hope to gather materials enough to inform, or divert, or correct, or vex the town." Beside letters and the first number, Dr. Swift contributed N° 3, a defence of the Beggar's Opera of Gay, and N° 19, dated December 2d, 1728, on the grievances of Ireland. The Intelligencer was warmly attacked by Dr. Delany, and, though said to have been well received, was suddenly relinquished by Sheridan early in 1729; for Swift, in a letter to Pope, on March 6th of this year, speaking of a copy of verses, says, "I sent it to be printed in a paper which Doctor Sheridan had engaged in, called the Intelligencer, of which he made but sorry work, and then dropped it."* These verses are a satire on Dr. Delany, who, in censuring the Intelligencer,

* Swift's Works, Vol. 18, p. 264.

had unfortunately stumbled on the Dean's contributions.

33. THE TOUCH-STONE. The Touch-Stone is a collection of Essays, historical, critical, moral, philosophical, and theological, upon the reigning diversions of the town; it was published in the year 1728, and contains seven essays, on Music, on Poetry, on Dancing, on Chorusses ancient and modern, on Audiences, on Masquerades, and on Theatres. It is a production altogether worthless, and written in a style of extreme vulgarity.

34. THE FREE-BRITON. A political paper in support of Sir Robert Walpole's administration, and of course the antagonist of the Craftsman. It appeared about the latter end of the year 1729, or beginning of 1730, and was published under the fictitious name of Francis Walsingham, Esq; but was, in reality, the production of *William Arnall*, an Attorney, and the successor of Concanen in the British Journal. Arnall began his political career under the age of twenty, and carried on a furious party-war for several years; in which having libelled several of Pope's particular friends, he was rewarded, not undeservedly, with a conspicuous station in the Dunciad. The commentator on Pope declares, that "he writ for hire and valued himself upon

it, and that he received for Free-Britons and other writings, in the space of four years, no less than *ten thousand nine hundred and ninety-seven pounds, six shillings and eight pence, out of the Treasury.*" Arnall was a most virulent and intemperate controversialist, and frequently exceeded in scurrility and abuse even the wishes of his patrons.

35. MEMOIRS OF THE SOCIETY OF GRUB-STREET. This is a paper of considerable wit and humour, in ridicule of the host of bad writers which at that time infested the republic of letters. Most of these gentlemen had previously figured in the Dunciad, but are here more minutely held up to public contempt. The productions of Eusden, Cibber, Concanen, Curll, Dennis, Henley, Ralph, Arnall, Theobald, Welsted, &c. &c. are exposed with wholesome severity, and in a strain of the most keen and sarcastic irony. The first number of this work appeared on Thursday, January 8th, 1730, and it was continued once a week for nearly three years; the last essay, N° 138, being dated August 24th, 1732. From these papers a selection was made in the year 1737, and published in two volumes 12mo; it contains a vast variety of matter, and much information relative to the obscure literature of the age. The principal writers of these satirical effusions

were, Dr. Richard Russel, a physician, and the author of a Treatise on Sea Water; and Dr. John Martyn,* a celebrated botanist, who was born in London in 1699, and whose love of literature and science rendered him a very useful and distinguished character during a great part of the 18th century. In 1720 he translated Tournefort's History of Plants, and, in imitation of this valuable work, formed a similar catalogue of plants growing in the environs of London. In 1726 he succeeded Dr. Bradley as Professor of Botany in the University of Cambridge, and in 1727 was admitted a fellow of the Royal Society. His profession was that of Physic, which he practised in the city of London, and afterwards at Chelsea. Dr. Martyn was indefatigable as an author, and published a variety of works on Botany, Medicine, &c. In the department of classical literature, he printed a translation of the Georgics and Bucolics of Virgil, with very valuable notes; his knowledge of botany, and rural economy, rendering his illustrations peculiarly pertinent and interesting: he also wrote some curious Dissertations on the Æneids of Virgil, 12mo. which were published after his death, in 1771. He retired to Streatham

* Their signatures in the Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street are *Bavius* and *Mævius*.

in 1752, and in the year 1761 resigned his professorship at Cambridge. He was one of the writers in the General Dictionary; and, after a life of great literary exertion, he expired at Chelsea, 1768, in the seventieth year of his age.

To the *Memoirs of the Society of Grub-Street*, the literary world is greatly indebted; for, in fact, to this publication we owe the Gentleman's Magazine. The Memoirs "meeting with encouragement," says Sir John Hawkins, "Cave projected an improvement thereon in a pamphlet of his own; and in the following year gave to the world the first number of the Gentleman's Magazine, with a notification, that the same would be continued monthly; incurring thereby a charge of plagiarism, which, as he is said to have confessed it, we may suppose he did not look upon as criminal."*

36. THE SPECULATIST. Matthew Concanen, a native of Ireland, was the author of this collection. He was bred to the law; but not succeeding in this line, he resolved to try his fortune in London as a party-writer, and enlisted under the banners of administration in the "British" and "London Journals." In these papers, and in the *Speculatist*, he was, to adopt the language of the

* Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street, Preface, p. 12. Hawkins's Life of Johnson, p. 32.

annotator on Pope, "the author of several dull and dead scurrilities, and, by abusing the Poet and his friend Bolingbroke, obtained an introduction into the Dunciad. He was, however, notwithstanding this promotion, by no means devoid of ability, and had he abstained from party virulence, and personal allusion, would have been viewed by posterity in a more respectable light. His poems, and his play entituled "Wexford Wells," have merit; and it tells highly to his honour, that when appointed, by the interest of the Duke of Newcastle, attorney-general of the island of Jamaica, he filled that post for seventeen years with unblemished integrity, and with the universal esteem of the inhabitants. He retired to London in December, 1748, with an ample fortune most honourably acquired, and with the expectation of enjoying the close of life in ease and affluence; in this, however, he was miserably disappointed; for the change of climate so affected his constitution, that he survived his arrival but a few weeks, dying of a rapid consumption on January 22d, 1749.

The Speculatist procured Concanen no reputation, and not much pecuniary profit. The expences of printing, indeed, were defrayed by subscription; but the subscribers had reason to complain that it was little more than a re-pub-

lication of our author's former periodical papers. In N° 35 of the Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street, dated September 3d, 1730, this conduct of Concanen is severely and justly censured. "It was but lately," says the writer, "that I met with a book called *The Speculatist*, though by enquiry I find it has been above a month privately dispersed (in the manner proper to libels,) and hath crept about, in that blind way, as far as it had strength to go. I found it to be a great *fraud* and *imposition* on the *subscribers;* being no other than a wretched relique, patched up from the *wrecks* of *British* and *London Journals*. No doubt it will soon be (like its author) *to be sold* to more than will buy it. In some weeks it will be crying out for help in the *advertisements*, under the usual and laudable form of *a few copies of the Speculatist being yet left undisposed of, may be had at* ——."* Concanen endeavoured to refute the charge, and his letter to this purpose is introduced into N° 38 of the Memoirs, where he asserts, that nine-tenths of the subscribers were his particular friends, and previously knew that the Speculatist was intended for little more than a re-publication. This is no apology, however, as he suffered many to subscribe who were ignorant of the circumstance. The Speculatist occupies one volume octavo.

* Vol. 1, p. 169.

37. THE UNIVERSAL SPECTATOR. The essays which form this work, and which were afterwards collected into four volumes 12mo, were originally prefixed to a weekly journal under this title; and on the top of the paper, which was printed in single sheets, it was said to be conducted "by Henry Stonecastle, of Northumberland, Esq." One of the real publishers and authors, however, was the industrious antiquary William Oldys; but who succeeded him in this office, for he continued in it no great length of time, I am unable to ascertain. Oldys was born in the year 1687, and was the son of William Oldys, LL. D. chancellor of Lincoln. Having early in life consumed his patrimony by extravagance, he was condemned for the greater part of the residue of his days to work for the Booksellers. He enjoyed the post, however, of Norroy king at arms, and was for some years librarian to the Earl of Oxford; upon whose death, he was employed by Osborne the Bookseller, who had purchased the Earl's books for thirteen thousand pounds, to form a catalogue, or rather a *Bibliotheque Raisonné*, of that valuable collection. He executed but two volumes of the five which compose the catalogue, owing probably to the difficulties under which, about this period, he had the misfortune to labour, being a resident in the Fleet. Dr.

Johnson completed the undertaking. Biography and Literary History have been much indebted to the researches of Oldys; he was the author of "The British Librarian, exhibiting a compendious review of all unpublished and valuable books in all sciences," 8vo. 1737; of "The Life of Sir Walter Ralcigh;" of those articles in the Biographia Britannica to which is affixed the signature G; of several articles in the General Historical Dictionary; of the "Life of Mr. Richard Carew;" of an "Introduction to Hayward's British Muse;" of the "Scarborough Miscellany," 1732, 1734; and of the "Life and Writings of Thomas Moffett, M. D." He assisted in many other works; and his manuscripts, which were numerous and valuable, were purchased by the booksellers for the new edition of the Biographja Britannica. In his manners and mode of living, Oldys was vulgar and irregular, and his death, it has been said, was hastened by his excesses; he attained, however, the age of 74, and died in 1761. The following curious anagram on his name was found among his manuscripts.

In word and WILL I AM a friend to you,
And one friend OLD IS worth an hundred new.

The first number of *The Universal Spectator* was published on October 12th, 1728, and it continued to appear weekly until the latter end of

the year 1742. In the year 1736, a selection from these papers was first printed in two volumes 12mo; a second edition appeared in 1747, in four volumes 12mo, containing two hundred and twenty-six numbers; and a third issued from the press in 1756. Of these impressions the second and third are in my possession, and to the first is prefixed a preface, in which the editor declares that most of them "were written by a gentleman not long since dead, and whose name alone, if we were at liberty to mention it, would give them a sufficient passport into the world." The person thus alluded to, cannot, of course, be Oldys; and to whom we are indebted, therefore, for the majority of these essays, cannot now probably be ascertained; John Kelly, however, the dramatic poet, and Sir John Hawkins, are said to have been contributors.*

The selection appears to have been made with judgment, and to verify the assertion of the publisher, that much caution had been used to purge it of all immorality and indecency, of all party spirit and private scandal;† and the author observes in N° 3, "that he did not give his paper the title of *Spectator*, in order to put it upon a comparison with those most excellent

* Vide Biographical Dictionary, article *Hawkins*.

† Vide Preface to the second edition in 4 vols.

essays which bear that name, but as it is a prosecution of the same design with them, viz. to correct vice, to ridicule folly, and reprove impertinence; to represent virtue all bright and lovely as it is; to calm the rougher passions, and to encourage those that are more soft and amiable; to point out the mistakes of life, and regulate the conduct of mankind."* The work is certainly, as a whole, very much inferior to its original; yet it contains some instructive and entertaining sketches, exhibits no mean knowledge of mankind, and has occasional flashes of wit and humour. It abounds also in tales, visions, allegories, and delineations of characters; and were the four volumes, by omitting all the trifling matter, condensed into one, this second selection might stand a chance of escaping the oblivion which now threatens the larger work.

38. THE HYP-DOCTOR. This foolish paper, as we have already mentioned,† was the production of *John Henley*. It appeared in 1731, and was written in defence of Sir Robert Walpole's administration. It is very strongly and very deservedly censured in the Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street; and it is, indeed, extraordinary that any minister would submit to the degradation of such support. The periodical papers for and

* Vol. 1, p. 15. † Essays, vol. 3, p. 304.

against government at this period are thus enumerated in the Memoirs just noticed. "I mention only two weekly papers, because I know but of two that can with any justice be ascribed to *the discontented party*, viz. *The Craftsman* and *Fog's Journal*.—But then, on the side of the *ministry*, besides the *London Journal* and *Read's Journal*, the *Free-Briton*, Weekly *Register*, and *Hyp-Doctor*, there appear two or three ministerial papers every week in the *Daily Courants:* so that, generally speaking, eight or nine papers are published every week in defence of the ministry." * The *Hyp-Doctor* was continued for some years, and was only exceeded in virulence and folly by its predecessor *The High German Doctor*.

39. THE TEMPLAR.

40. THE CORRESPONDENT. Of these papers I have not been able to obtain copies; but with the first I am partially acquainted through the medium of the Gentleman's Magazine. They both made their appearance in the year 1731; the *Templar* in London, who assumes the honour of being nephew to the Spectator's Templar; and the *Correspondent*, in Dublin.

41. THE COMEDIAN, OR PHILOSOPHICAL ENQUIRER. The author of this work, which came out monthly in 1732, was Mr. Thomas

* Vol. 2, No. 84, p. 109, 110.

Cooke. He was born at Braintree in Essex, in 1707, was educated at Felsted school in the same county, and at the age of nineteen printed an excellent edition of Andrew Marvel's Works, with a life of the author. In the year 1728 he brought before the public his principal literary labour, a translation of Hesiod, with notes; of which notes part was contributed by Theobald, and part by the Earl of Pembroke, whose patronage he had been fortunate enough to obtain. This is a respectable effort, though by no means superseding the necessity of a more modern version, the elegance and sweetness of Hesiod's versification demanding all the melody which the most polished English poetry can communicate. The fragment of his "Shield of Hercules" has met with an adequate translator in the volume entitled "Exeter Essays." Mr. Cooke, whose pen was seldom unemployed, published likewise translations of Cicero de Natura Deorum, of Terence, and of the Amphitryon of Plautus; he contributed also to the British, London, and Daily Journals, and wrote several plays and farces which met with little success. One of these, entitled, "Penelope, a dramatic opera," and his poem called "The Battle of the Poets," in which Phillips and Welsted are the victors, to the discomfiture of Swift and Pope, gave him a ready

passport to the Dunciad. He died, in distressed circumstances, about the year 1750. *The Comedian*, which is censured for its ignorance and impiety, in the Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street, vol. 2, p. 310, was continued but for eight months, and then expired, from its inability to defray the expences of printing and paper.

42. FOG'S JOURNAL, A SELECTION FROM. The Journal from which these essays are selected, was written in opposition to the government; it commenced in 1728, and became so popular that it continued to be published for nearly eight years. The selection, however, which we are now noticing, appeared in 1732, in two volumes octavo; and, as its last number is dated December 25th, 1731, and its first September 28th, 1728, it, of course, embraces little more than three years of the long career which the Journal ran. Several of the essays in these volumes display considerable ability.

43. THE BEE. This paper, the production of Budgell, we have already noticed in that author's life. He began it in 1733, continued it weekly for about two years, and then, owing to a disagreement with the booksellers relative to the mode of conducting it, suddenly dropped the work. In its structure and contents, it resembles more a magazine than the legitimate periodical

essay; great part of it is, indeed, a mere compilement, and it has, not undeservedly, fallen into oblivion.

44. THE PROMPTER. I believe this paper is not to be obtained in a collected state; at least, I have been unsuccessful in my researches for its acquisition. It was published in the years 1734 and 1735; is mentioned in a note to the Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street, where it is censured for its abuse;* and is occasionally introduced into the Gentleman's Magazine. Not much, however, can be reported in its favour from the specimens given in that valuable work. Popple and Budgell are said to have contributed to its contents.

45. THE OLD WHIG, OR CONSISTENT PROTESTANT. A great portion of this weekly publication, not less, according to Dr. Kippis,† than fifty papers, was written by that learned and worthy dissenting minister, Dr. Chandler. It was continued for three years; the first number being dated March 13th, 1735, and the concluding one, March 13th, 1738. Many of these essays are conducted with great spirit and ability. Dr. Chandler was zealously attached to the person and character of George II.

* Vol. 2, p. 297.

† Vide Biographia Britannica, vol. 3, p. 436, Note.

46. COMMON SENSE. Upon the decease of Fog's Journal, this paper was commenced in behalf of the same party and cause. It was superior to its predecessor in literary execution, and was supported by several characters of high rank, both in the fashionable and learned world. Lord Chesterfield and Lord Lyttelton were contributors; and their essays, many of which are upon topics of more permanent interest than politics, add much to the value of the work. It came before the public in February, 1737, and was carried on with considerable success for some years.

47. THE CHAMPION. The greater part of this work was written by the celebrated Henry Fielding, who was born at Sharpham Park, near Glastonbury, in Somersetshire, on April 22d, 1707. After a classical education at Eton, he was sent to study the civil law at Leyden; but, owing to the pecuniary difficulties of his father, who had a large family, he was under the necessity of relinquishing the university, after a residence of two years. Strong passions, an ardent imagination, and a taste for dissipation, soon plunged young Fielding, on his return to London, into all the gaieties of the metropolis. To supply a fund for his indulgences, he became, at the early age of twenty, a writer for the stage, and in the year

1727 produced his first Drama, entituled " Love in several Masques." This, though it immediately succeeded the popular comedy of the " Provok'd Husband," was well received by the public, and inducing our author to continue his dramatic labours, he annually brought forward, for a number of years, a regular supply for the stage, and, all together, wrote not less than twenty-six comedies and farces, few of which are now remembered, and but one or two occasionally represented. Many of them are, indeed, but translations from the French, and they were all written to obtain a temporary popularity, and a provision for the day; they are defective in plot, consistency, and finishing, and their humour is too generally coarse and extravagant.

At a period when, notwithstanding a series of exertions for the theatre of nearly seven years duration, and the patronage of several distinguished noblemen, the finances of Fielding were still in the most deplorable state, two events occurred, which, with common prudence, might have placed him beyond the reach of future want. He married, in his twenty-seventh year, a Miss Craddock, of Salisbury, a young lady of great beauty and worth, and with a fortune of fifteen hundred pounds; to this accession of happiness and wealth, was soon after added, by

the death of his mother, an estate at Stower, in Dorsetshire, the value of which exceeded two hundred pounds per annum.

It was now within the power of Fielding, with this property, and the produce of his literary talents, to have enjoyed a permanent and liberal income; but, intoxicated with the sudden change of circumstances, totally void of economy, and ambitious of figuring as a gentleman of large landed property, he lived upon his estate in Dorsetshire with a splendor and with an establishment which would have demanded tenfold the amount of his income. In short, his servants, horses, and hounds, his luxury and unlimited hospitality, soon effected his ruin; and in less than three years, he beheld himself entirely stripped of his wife's fortune and his own patrimony!

Having thus dissipated what might have proved an elegant competency, and having a rising family to provide for, it became necessary to look round for a resource more permanent than what literature was likely to afford. At the age of thirty, therefore, he resumed his profession, entered as a student of the Temple, and in due time was called to the bar. His life was now a scene of great and varied industry; he attended the courts and circuits with regularity, and, until

professional emoluments began to flow, supported himself by the efforts of his pen. He again composed for the stage, published a number of political pamphlets and miscellaneous pieces, and engaged in several periodical papers.

His extraordinary powers in fictitious narrative, however, were not developed until the year 1742, when the publication of his "Joseph Andrews" unveiled to the public a vein of humour and invention, and a facility and truth in the delineation of character, which rivalled the happiest effusions of Cervantes and Addison. The reputation which he acquired by this production was, however, much overbalanced, by a series of afflictions, the consequence of broken health and domestic anxiety. The effects of early intemperance had now made visible inroads upon a constitution otherwise strong, and he was agonized by violent and protracted fits of the gout; to this bodily suffering, was added the most poignant grief for the loss of a faithful and beloved wife, a blow, which, for some months, had nearly deprived him of reason.

Time, however, as in most human calamities, mitigated the severity of his sorrow, and he was roused to further exertion by the critical situation of the empire, when, in the year 1745, it was shaken by the terrors of rebellion. He

wrote in support of government and the protestant religion, and was rewarded by an appointment to the office of an acting magistrate for the county of Middlesex, a situation of some profit, but of great labour, and almost necessarily exposed to calumny and reproach. He discharged its duties, notwithstanding, with unwearied vigilance, and published several useful tracts, on the causes of crime, and on the maintenance of the poor.

Great as were the fatigues of this official employment, his imagination, ever active, seemed to acquire fresh strength, and, during the intervals of business, was engaged in the composition of a tissue of adventures, which, for felicity of conduct and combination, may be pronounced unrivalled. No fable, indeed, ancient or modern, can vie with that of "Tom Jones" in variety and management of incident; no event or circumstance, however minute, even though mingled with a plot apparently intricate, seems lost or useless in the completion of the tale, and the characters are drawn with astonishing vivacity and skill. To the seductive tendency of some portions of the narrative, to a few scenes too warmly coloured, objections may be perhaps justly made, but the result of the whole is not unfriendly to morality; vice is invariably punished, the noblest feelings and affections are frequently awakened, and no unprejudiced

person can peruse the work without being convinced that the author, as was really the case, was a lover of virtue, and a believer in revealed religion.

Neither poverty nor disease, nor the distractions of public business, could repress the activity of Fielding's mind. In 1751 he produced his "Amelia;" which, if not equal in the texture and variety of the fable, or in humorous delineation, to Tom Jones, is nevertheless possessed of great merit, and abounds more in pathos, and moral observation, than any other of the author's works.

In a year or two after this publication, the health of Fielding so rapidly declined, though he continued to amuse himself by literary employment, that it became evident to his friends that he could not long survive; a dropsy had supervened, and he was advised by his physicians to undertake a voyage to Lisbon, in hopes that the mildness and stability of the climate might renovate his powers; the experiment, however, failed, and he lived but two months after his arrival in Portugal, expiring on October 8th, 1754, in his forty-eighth year.

Though guilty of numerous errors in the early period of life, for which he afterwards severely atoned, the moral and religious principles of Fielding were never shaken; and had health been

allowed him, it was his intention to have published a refutation of the sceptical tenets of Bolingbroke. As a writer, he is truly original, and in the comic epopeia without a rival.

The Champion was published thrice a week, on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and consists of ninety-four numbers, the first of which is dated November 15th, 1739, and the last June 19th, 1740. The first edition in its collected form, which is that in my possession, was printed in 1741, in two volumes duodecimo, and the work has undergone, I believe, three impressions.

An advertisement prefixed to the first volume informs us, that "several persons having been concerned in writing the Champion, and it not being reasonable that any one should be answerable for the rest, it has been thought proper to signify to the reader, that all the papers distinguished with a C, or an L, are the work of one hand." The numbers thus distinguished were the composition of Fielding, and stamp a considerable value on the production, which, with the exception of the Freethinker, is superior to any that we have noticed since the close of the eighth volume of the Spectator. A great portion of the Champion is employed on the follies, vices, amusements, and literature of the age; and the remainder is occupied by political wit and discussion,

uniformly directed against the administration of Walpole; to every paper, indeed, is annexed what is termed an "Index to the Times," consisting of news miscellaneous and political, and frequently charged with the most sarcastic irony.

The assumed name under which the Champion issues his lucubrations, is *Captain Hercules Vinegar;* and in the introductory number is given a detail of the whole family of the *Vinegars*, to whom different departments in the paper are distributed. To Mr. Nehemiah Vinegar, for instance, the Captain's father, history and politics are allotted; to Mr. Counsellor Vinegar, Nehemiah's brother, all subjects of law and judicature; to Dr. John Vinegar, the Counsellor's son, medicine and natural philosophy; to Nol Vinegar, the Captain's brother, classical literature; to Tom Vinegar, his eldest son, modern poetry; to Jack Vinegar, his youngest son, the superintendance of fashionable manners; and to Mrs. Joan Vinegar, his wife, domestic news. This good lady, who takes a conspicuous share in the conduct of the work, is celebrated for her loquacity; and in a paper dated February 5th, 1740, her powers in this department are noticed in the following ludicrous manner.

"I was waked this morning by a very great noise, which, in my first confusion, I imagined to

have been thunder; but recollecting it was a season of the year when that rarely happens, I began to think the great guns were firing on some public solemnity; till at last, I was very much surprized, and I believe the reader will be so too, to understand that this dreadful hurricane was nothing more than my wife *Joan*, who was laying about her with great vigour, and exercising her lungs on a maid-servant for the benefit of my family.

"This good woman is one of those notable housewives, whom the careless part of the world distinguish by the name of a scold. This musical talent of hers, when we were first married, did not so well agree with me. I have often thought myself in the cave of Æolus, or perhaps wished myself there on account of this wind-music; but it is now become so habitual to me, that I am little more alarmed at it, than a garrison at the tattoo or reveille; indeed, I have, I thank God, for these thirty years last past, seldom laid myself down, or rose up, without; all the capitulations I have made are, that she would keep the garrison-hours, and not disturb my repose by such her performances.

"It hath been remarked by some naturalists, that nature hath given all creatures some arms for their defence; some are armed with horns, some

with tusks, some with claws, some with strength, others with swiftness; and the tongue may, I think, be properly said to be the arms which nature has bestowed on a woman."*

It is obvious from the plan chalked out in this first number of the Champion, that if properly carried into execution, much variety and entertainment may be expected as the result; nor will the reader be disappointed; for, though the portion employed on politics be now uninteresting, there are numerous essays, where humour, invention, and criticism, will afford ample remuneration. As specimens in the first of these provinces, I would refer to N° 11, vol. 1, p. 69, on a club in the possession of Captain Vinegar, which has the singular property "of falling, of its own accord, on every egregious knave who comes in its way;" to N° 16, p. 111, on the different ages of the world which have occurred since the iron one of Ovid, and what the author divides into the age of *flint*, the age of *lead*, and the age of *wood*; and to N° 47, on the *Art of getting a Name*. Under the head of *Invention*, might be enumerated several dreams, visions, and allegories, and I would particularly distinguish the vision of the Palace of Riches in Nos. 19 and 20, vol. 1, p. 132—139, which exhibits a fertile stock of satirical

* Vol. 1, p. 238, 239.

imagination. In the critical department are to be found many ingenious dissertations and literary remarks; of these, N° 50, vol. 1, p. 340, on the "Ruins of Rome" by Dyer, is an elegant and pleasing example; and from the literary articles which are frequently appended to the "Index to the Times," I shall beg leave to copy one, which, being on the subject of periodical composition, will require no apology for its insertion.

"Short occasional essays," observes the author, "on the follies, vices, humours, controversies, and amusements of the age, have been esteemed both so useful and entertaining, that not a library in the three kingdoms, and scarce a lady's closet, is without those great originals, the *Tatlers* and *Spectators*.—And that no subsequent pieces have obtained the like success, is perhaps as much owing to an opinion, that those volumes had exhausted all the wit and humour the subject was capable of, as that the merits of *Steele* and *Addison* are above comparison and imitation.

"But there's a sort of craft attending vice and absurdity; and when hunted out of society in one shape, they seldom want address to re-insinuate themselves in another:—Hence the modes of licence vary almost as often as those of dress, and consequently require continual observation

to detect and explode them anew.—There is room, then, for other papers to shine as well as those quoted with so much deference and honour above; and 'tis an affront to the nation to imagine its whole stock of genius depended on any two lives whatever. Those justly celebrated gentlemen have, certainly, a claim to be placed at the head of *this* Table of Fame, but the door ought not to be shut on their successors; and among them, the *Free-Thinker* has a legitimate title to be introduced the foremost.

"In the volumes under that title, is contained a great variety of discourses on subjects not touched, or but slightly, by the two accomplished masters, his predecessors; some handled with wit and pleasantry, some with great force of reason, some with the charms of eloquence and persuasion, and all with the strictest regard to politeness, good sense, and virtue. There are in particular certain papers on government, laws, religion, enthusiasm, and superstition, which are admirable; and many short pieces of poetry, that would have done honour to the most eminent writers among us."*

Of the coadjutors of Fielding in this paper, a Mr. Ralph, whom we shall have occasion shortly to notice, was the principal; he, it is probable,

* Vol. 1, p. 258.

wrote the *Index to the Times*, and the numbers marked with two asterisks, or signed *Lilbourne*.

48. OLD ENGLAND, OR THE CONSTITUTIONAL JOURNAL, was a weekly paper written to oppose the ministry which succeeded to the long reign of Sir Robert Walpole. It commenced in February, 1743, and had many contributors, of which William Guthrie, the author of the Geographical Grammar, and who died in 1769, was the principal. It was continued for several years, and had, in the early part of its progress, the occasional assistance of Lord Chesterfield.

49. THE FEMALE SPECTATOR. Eliza Haywood, the author of the *Female Spectator*, was the daughter of a tradesman, and born in London in the year 1693. She early imbibed a taste for dramatic poetry and the stage; and having received a good education, and, though not beautiful, possessing a fine person, she made her appearance on the Dublin Theatre in 1715. Neither in this attempt, however, nor in writing for the stage, had she any success, and therefore turned her attention to novel-writing, in which her first productions, entitled, "The Court of Caramania," and "The New Utopia," owing to their looseness and immorality, involved her in considerable disgrace, and promoted her to a situation in the Dunciad of Pope.

Her subsequent life and writings, however, amply atoned for the errors of her youth; as she became undeviatingly correct in the former, and in the latter it was her constant aim to inculcate the purest precepts of morality and decorum. Her imagination was fertile, her industry great, and in the course of the last twelve or fifteen years of her existence, she produced the following effusions of fancy. *The Female Spectator; Epistles for the Ladies; Fortunate Foundling; Adventures of Nature; History of Betsy Thoughtless; Jenny and Jemmy Jessamy; Invisible Spy; The Husband;* and *The Wife;* in all, nineteen volumes 12mo, independent of pamphlets, miscellaneous pieces, and a collection of some of her early productions in four volumes 12mo, with her portrait,

In flow'rs and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress'd.*

Mrs. Haywood died in 1756, in the sixty-fourth year of her age.

The *Female Spectator* was published monthly in books; the first in April, 1744, and the twenty-fourth and last in March, 1746. As soon as completed, they were immediately collected into four volumes 12mo, and have gone through several impressions; the *seventh*, and, I believe, the *last* edition, is now before me, and was

* Dunciad, b. 2, l. 160.

printed in 1771. Mrs. Haywood and three female friends, a wife, a widow, and a maid, and who are represented as highly accomplished, are supposed to meet two evenings in every week at Mrs. H—'s lodgings, for the purpose of communicating their essays and remarks, and selecting and arranging the topics of future lucubrations.

The subjects are well chosen, and are rendered very interesting by a great variety of anecdotes, characters, and tales, which are usually related with vivacity and judgment, and in a style, if not elegant, yet easy and perspicuous, and, with a few exceptions, free from vulgarisms. If love, marriage, modesty, coquetry, jealousy, scandal, intrigue, dress, &c. are topics more immediately addressed to the ladies, there are many also which are equally adapted to either sex, and to every age; such as taste, imagination, good nature, ingratitude, gaming, truth, superstition, religion, &c. and one strong recommendation of the whole work is, that its tendency is powerfully and uniformly in favour of all that is decent and virtuous. The eleventh book, which contains a dissertation on the intellectual world, is singularly curious and entertaining; and in the fifth, the author, while speaking with approbation of properly regulated dramatic exhibitions, expresses an opinion of Shakspeare's merit, which does

honour to her taste and discrimination, and, at the same time, discovers, how little, even in a period so late as the middle of the last century, his genius was either known or valued. "Some ladies," remarks Mrs. Haywood, "have shewn a truly public spirit in rescuing the admirable, *yet almost forgotten Shakspeare, from being totally sunk in oblivion*:—they have contributed to raise a monument to his memory, and frequently honoured his works with their presence on the stage:—an action which deserves the highest encomiums, and will be attended with an adequate reward; since, in preserving the fame of the dead bard, they add a brightness to their own, which will shine to late posterity."* The Female Spectator was very popular during the time of its publication, and for many years subsequent to its first appearance, and merits revival in a form better accommodated to the modern taste in typography and embellishment.

50. The Remembrancer. Mr. James Ralph, the author of this paper, and of many essays in the *Champion* and *Old England*, was originally a schoolmaster at Philadelphia, in North America. He came over to England about the year 1728, and commenced an author by profession. He wrote in the London Journal, the Weekly

* Vol. 1, p. 259, 260.

Medley, &c. and by his industry and perseverance obtained the patronage of some individuals of considerable rank and influence. Among these was Mr. Doddington, afterwards Lord Melcombe, to whose party views he was long an useful and subservient instrument. His ambition to become a poet, and his temerity in attacking his superiors in the commonwealth of letters, at length introduced him to the honours of the Dunciad, where his poem, entituled *Night*, is not undeservedly satirized; he was immediately indebted, however, for his insertion among the dunces, to some foolish lines entituled *Sawney*, an abusive satire on Swift, Gay, and Pope. He was, likewise, an unsuccessful votary of the comic Muse, and attempted a still higher flight in what is termed a Pindaric Ode in blank verse, *The Muse's Address to the King*.* His prose compositions were, nevertheless, far from being despicable; and his "History of England" from the revolution to the restoration, in which he received the assistance of his patron Lord Melcombe, and by whose advice, indeed, it was written, is a curious and valuable compilation. Ralph had frequently experienced the miseries attendant upon writing for bread;

* See some curious strictures on his *Night*, his *Fashionable Lady*, a Farce, and his *Pindaric Ode*, in the Memoirs of the Society of Grub-street, vol. 1, Nos. 5, 16, and 21.

Spectator. It consists but of nine nur which were published weekly, and which foi their collected state, a thin octavo volume. first number is dated August 2d, 1746, an last October 4th, 1746. To every essay pended a *Compendium of the Times*, conta among other political affairs, a variety of pa lars relative to the rebellion, and the execut its vanquished chiefs. The first compendiu instance, mentions the execution of nine officers, on the 28th of September, 1746 among these is the name of *James Dawso* unfortunate youth who furnished the subj Shenstone's very pathetic ballad. The n choly proof of female constancy and tend which was exhibited on this awful occasi thus circumstantially narrated.

"A young lady, of a good family and han fortune, had, for some time, extremely love been equally beloved by Mr. *James Dawso* of those unhappy gentlemen, who suffer *Wednesday* last at *Kennington Common* foi treason; and had he been acquitted, or condemnation found the royal mercy, the his enlargement was to have been that of marriage.

"I will not prolong the narrative by any tion of what she suffered on sentence being

upon him; none, excepting those utterly incapable of feeling any soft or generous emotions, but may easily conceive her agonies; beside, the sad catastrophe will be sufficient to convince you of their sincerity.

"Not all the persuasions of her kindred could prevent her from going to the place of execution; she was determined to see the last of a person so dear to her, and accordingly followed the sledges in a hackney coach, accompanied by a gentleman nearly related to her, and one female friend.—She got near enough to see the fire kindled, which was to consume that heart she knew so much devoted to her, and all the other dreadful preparations for his fate, without being guilty of any of those extravagances her friends had apprehended; but when all was over, and that she found he was no more, she drew her head back into the coach and crying out,—*My dear, I follow thee,—Lord Jesus receive both our souls together*, fell on the neck of her companion, and expired in the very moment she was speaking."

Not even the muse of Shenstone, who has literally copied the latter part of this description, could add to the force and simple pathos with which it is related. The lines which correspond with the last paragraph of Mrs. Haywood's narrative, I shall transcribe for the sake of immediate comparison.

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She follow'd him, prepar'd to view
The terrible behests of law,
And the last scene of Jemmy's woes
With calm and steadfast eye she saw.

Distorted was that blooming face
Which she had fondly lov'd so long,
And stifled was that tuneful breath
Which in her praise had sweetly sung.

And sever'd was that beauteous neck
Round which her arms had fondly clos'd,
And mangled was that beautcous breast
On which her love-sick head repos'd.

And ravish'd was that constant heart
She did to every heart prefer;
For though it could its king forget,
'Twas true and loyal still to her.

Amid those unrelenting flames
She bore this constant heart to see,
But when 'twas moulder'd into dust,
"Yet, yet," she cried, "I follow thee."

"My death, my death alone, can show
The pure, the lasting love I bore:
Accept, O Heaven! of woes like ours,
And let us, let us weep no more."

The dismal scene was o'er and past,
The lover's mournful hearse retir'd;
The maid drew back her languid head,
And, sighing forth his name, expir'd.

The essays in this publication are interesting, and abound in curious anecdote. N° 4 is written

to reprobate the avidity shewn by every class of society to witness the dreadful executions which so frequently occurred at this unhappy era; and, as a proof of the extreme misery sometimes resulting from this savage curiosity, an incident is related that took place only a very few years previous to the publication of the volume upon which we are commenting. As the *Parrot* is one of the most rare of our old periodical papers, I shall offer no apology for the introduction of this story, more especially as it will afford a proper specimen of the style and manner in which the work is conducted.

" A poor labouring man in the west of England had a son, who, when he came to be about eleven or twelve years of age, discovered a quickness of apprehension and ready wit, beyond what could be expected in a boy that had never been at any school, and could neither write nor read; —the smart answers he gave whenever he was asked any question, and many things were told of him, made him be taken notice of by a neighbouring gentleman of a good estate, who, when he saw him with his father in the field, would often call to him and talk to him.

" This worthy person thought it a pity that a lad, of so good a capacity, should be brought up to follow the plough; he therefore took him from

his father, cloathed him in clean decent apparel, and had him instructed as far as was necessary for an ordinary tradesman; then sent him to London to a pewterer, of whom he had some knowledge, and soon after, coming up himself to parliament, bound him apprentice.

"The charity was not thrown away,—the young man was extremely ingenious at his business, very honest and obliging, and had no other fault than an insatiable curiosity of seeing every thing he found others eager to be spectators of; but his master overlooked this in him, in consideration of his good qualities, and they agreed extremely well the whole time they were together. —His apprenticeship being expired, he married a young woman, to whom he had the good fortune to be agreeable: she had a better portion than his circumstances could have given him room to hope for; and his patron, making a considerable addition to the sum she brought, set him up in a handsome manner; and being so, his honesty, industry, and frugality, soon improved his stock, and in a very few years he became a man of consequence among those of his trade.

"Finding himself perfectly at ease, and having a good journeyman whom he could entrust with his business, he began to have a desire of seeing his old father, and the place which had given him

birth, and to take his wife with him on this visit; she was a good sort of a woman, and perhaps, like most of her sex, fond of a jaunt into the country, did not oppose his inclination to it in the least; and the matter being soon agreed upon between them, he hired a horse, mounted her behind him, and set out for Devonshire.—I shall pass over the particulars of their journey, as having nothing in it material to my purpose, and only tell you, that when they came within a few miles of the village to which they were going, they saw a great number of people, some riding, others running towards a road which turned out of that they were in; on asking the occasion of this unusual concourse, he was told they were going to see the execution of a man who was to be hanged for sheep-stealing.

"His natural curiosity for such spectacles would not suffer him to pursue his journey without gratifying that prevailing passion; and in spite of all his wife, who would not go with him, could say, to hinder him, he left her at the first inn they came to, and followed the crowd he saw before him with all the speed he could, till he came to the gallows, which he very well remembered, having, when a boy, seen many a one brought to it.—He got thither almost at the same time with the condemned person; but what was his astonishment, when, no sooner casting his eyes upon him,

he knew him to be his own father.—He flung himself off his horse, without regarding what became of him,—flew to those who had the care of conducting the malefactor, and begged the liberty of speaking to him; which being granted, he made himself known to him, and there passed between them all that could be expected on so mournful an occasion.—The son expressed the utmost concern that his father had not acquainted him, by letter, with his misfortune, that he might have come sooner down in order to endeavour to save him from so shameful an end, if all he had in the world could have done it; and the father answered, that he did not repent his not having done so, because as he had never any thing to give him, he should not have had any comfort in life, if prolonged by the ruin of so dutiful a child, and that he was only grieved at the disgrace which the crime he suffered for must entail on him.—He told him that it was extreme poverty, and the unwillingness he had of being burthensome to him, as he had a wife and children, which had made him do that in his old age, which in his youth he should have trembled at the thoughts of; and uttered many other expressions of grief and tenderness, which drew tears from all who were near enough to hear them, till the officers of justice obliging them to break off any

further discourse, they embraced and parted; the old man was dragged to his fate, and the young one, struck with horror, fell that instant into violent convulsion fits; the people about him had charity enough to give him what assistance was in their power; and hearing that, in his intervals of reason, he desired to be carried to that inn where he had left his wife, some of them took him up and bore him on their shoulders.

"The poor woman was extremely frighted, as you may suppose, to see her husband in this condition; but on enquiring where, and in what manner they had found him, and being informed of the dreadful occasion, fell into agonies little inferior to his.—A physician was immediately sent for to them both; the wife was soon upon her legs, but the man lay a long time ill; at length, however, he recovered enough to return to London,—which was all that could be done for him;—the sad success of his journey had such an effect upon him, that it turned his brain, and he died soon after in a mad-house, leaving a wife and three children, in circumstances very much impaired by the expences this misfortune had rendered unavoidable."

The same paper contains an observation not very honourable to our dramatic taste at this period, and which proves how greatly, in the

course of half a century, refinement and civilization have increased. "Even in your most elegant diversions," remarks the author, addressing the British public," a sanguinary disposition is discoverable in you; those of the theatre I mean; and for proof of this assertion, I can mention several plays, particularly those entituled *The Libertine*, and *Titus Andronicus*, both which contain only a series of the most shocking murders, from their first to their last acts, and yet seldom fail of being honoured with the most crowded audiences, and numbers frequently turned away for want of room in the house to contain them."

N° 8 of the Parrot is a valuable essay on the muse of satire and panegyric, and is written with more than the author's usual vigour.

55. THE TATLER REVIVED. Of this effort, which I believe is the last that has been made to continue the plan and title of Steele's essays, I know nothing more than that it was attempted in the year 1750, and, after a short trial, completely failed. The specimens which were brought before the public are, I understand, now no longer procurable.

Mr. Boswell, in his Life of Johnson, has remarked, that "a few days before the first of his essays (The Rambler) came out, there started another competitor for fame in the same form,

under the title of "The Tatler Revived," which I believe was born but to die;" and Johnson himself, in his first Idler, dated April 15th, 1758, has alluded both to this abortive attempt, and to the Universal and Female Spectators. "Those," says he, "who attempt periodical essays seem to be often stopped in the beginning, by the difficulty of finding a proper title. Two writers since the time of the Spectator, have assumed his name, without any pretensions to lawful inheritance; *an effort was once made to revive the Tatler;* and the strange appellations, by which other papers have been called, shew that the authors were distressed, like the natives of America, who came to the Europeans to beg a name."

56. THE STUDENT. This is a miscellany of great merit, which was published monthly in numbers at Oxford, in the years 1750, and 1751. It rejects all politics and party discussion, but embraces a wide field in polite literature, and professes to insert nothing in its pages that had previously been published. It includes many curious documents in history and biography; several interesting experiments and observations in physics; some critical dissertations; a valuable contribution of poetry by some of the first bards of the age, among which are various pieces by Warton and Smart; many essays on ethics,

religion, and morality; and a copious seasoning of wit and humour. N° 1 is dated January 31st, 1750, and N° 9, September 16th, 1750; these, with a supplement, form the first volume in octavo; the second consists of nine more, to which are affixed the names of the nine muses, together with a tenth under the title of *Apollo*, which is dated July 3d, 1751. This work preceded the Rambler of Dr. Johnson, therefore, not quite two months; and in the first number of vol. 2d, entitled *Clio*, and printed in October, 1750, the following very just and handsome tribute is paid to the merits of this excellent paper, and which proves how soon its value was properly estimated. The author is writing on the subject of gratitude, and declares for himself and his associates, that "there is one gentleman from whom we should be proud to borrow, if our plan forbad it not; and, since the text is *Gratitude*, we beg leave to return our acknowledgments to him for the noble and rational entertainment he has given us; we mean the admirable author of the *Rambler*, a work that exceeds any thing of the kind ever published in this kingdom, some of the SPECTATORS excepted—if indeed they may be excepted. We own ourselves unequal to the task of commending such a work up to its merits—where the diction is the most high-wrought imaginable, and

yet, like the brilliancy of a diamond, exceeding perspicuous in its richness—where the sentiments ennoble the style, and the style familiarizes the sentiments—where every thing is easy and natural, yet every thing is masterly and strong. May the public favour crown his merits, and may not the English, under the auspicious reign of George II. neglect a man who, had he lived in the first century, would have been one of the greatest favourites of Augustus."

As we are just verging upon the consideration of the Johnsonian papers, this high encomium, whilst yet the Rambler had but run a small part of its course, may be considered as an immediate and apposite introduction to the subsequent essays.

We have now enumerated, as the subject of our second essay, the periodical papers which were published between the close of the eighth volume of the *Spectator*, and the commencement of the *Rambler;* a series which presents us with a great variety, both in matter and manner. About one third of the number may be included under the head of politics; and of these *Cato's Letters*, *The Craftsman*, *Common Sense*, and *The True Patriot*, are the best.

Of the miscellaneous essays, the most valuable are *The Free-thinker*, *The Universal Spectator*, *The*

Grub-street Journal, The Champion, The Female Spectator, and *The Student*. In a class of an inferior kind, but of which some few parts merit a rescue from oblivion, are to be arranged *The Censor, The Plain Dealer, The Humourist, Terræ Filius, The Fool*, and the Selections from Mist's and Fog's Journal.

To none of these, however, can we ascribe the praise of having rivalled either the Spectator, Guardian, or Tatler; the Free-thinker has, perhaps, made the nearest approach; but in the arrangement of our classical essayists, though a period of thirty-six years intervenes, the Rambler must ever immediately follow the close of the Guardian.

Yet it must not be forgotten, that, with few exceptions, all the papers, in this long interval, which have been written upon universal topics, upon men, manners, and morals, have in their general tendency been friendly to virtue, literature, and religion; and there are many excellent essays interspersed among them, which, were they collected into two or three volumes, would by such selection and approximation acquire a lustre and a value that cannot attach to them while distantly scattered, and overwhelmed amid inferior materials.

PART II.

ESSAY I.

THE LITERARY LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on September the 7th, 1709. From his father, who was a native of Cubley in Derbyshire, and a bookseller at Lichfield, he inherited that morbid melancholy which so frequently embittered his existence; nor was this the only disease with which he had to struggle; from his nurse, he imbibed the distemper called the king's evil, and for the removal of which his parents, who were staunch Jacobites, presented him to Queen Anne for the royal touch. An operation, however, notwithstanding this potent remedy, became necessary, and the lower part of his face continued ever afterwards disfigured by the marks of the knife. His hearing also, and the sight of his left eye, were injured by this complaint.

In the education of Johnson no deviation from the common plan is perceptible; after acquiring the elements of his own language, he was sent to the free-school at Lichfield, where, under the care of two very able masters, he made a rapid progress in classical literature. At the age of fifteen, and in the year 1725, he resided for some months with the Rev. Cornelius Ford, his cousin; a man of licentious manners, but possessed of considerable talents and learning, and from him he received much and important assistance in his studies. On quitting the roof of this relation, he was placed, by his direction, in a school at Stourbridge in Worcestershire, at that time conducted by Mr. Wentworth, and, having remained there rather better than a twelvemonth, he returned to his father's house.

During this early period of his life, many of the features which distinguished his character through life, were apparent. He was ambitious to excel, to be considered as the chieftain of his class at school, and he demanded from his companions great deference and attention. His memory was peculiarly strong and retentive, and he was uncommonly inquisitive, but, at the same time, exhibited a constitutional indolence, and an aversion from regular study; what he had to perform, he would delay to execute as long as

possible, and then dispatch it with singular promptitude and vigour. He seldom mingled in the common diversions of his school-fellows, but preferred sauntering in the fields, where he was usually employed in talking to himself.

At Lichfield he spent two years in a very desultory course of reading, a mode of acquiring knowledge to which he had been attached whilst a very young boy, and which was afterwards confirmed by the advice of Mr. Ford; "obtain," said he, "some general principles of every science: he who can talk only on one subject, or act only in one department, is seldom wanted, and, perhaps, never wished for; while the man of general knowledge can often benefit, and always please." Like Milton, he was passionately fond of romances; and Dr. Percy has recorded, that when a boy, and spending part of a summer at his parsonage-house in the country, he chose for his regular reading the old Spanish romance of *Felixmarte of Hercania* in folio, which he read quite through. During his residence at Lichfield, however, though his reading was various and without system, it did not consist of works of mere amusement; to adopt his own words, he studied "all literature, all ancient authors," and he attempted translations from *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Horace*. Of these early efforts, Mr. Boswell

has collected some specimens, of which the two versions from Horace are, by many degrees, the best. It is probable, indeed, that as he never embraced any profession, the plan, if it can be so termed, that he now pursued, and which he continued, with few exceptions, through life, was the one best calculated for the situation that he was destined to fill in the republic of letters; it was adapted, in fact, for the acquisition of uncommon and multifarious knowledge.

Owing to the poverty of his parents, it was not likely that Johnson should ever enjoy the benefits to be derived from an University; fortunately, however, when about nineteen, he was selected by Mr. Corbet, of Shropshire, to attend and assist the studies of his son at Oxford; this young man had been the school-fellow of Johnson, and on the 31st of October, 1728, they were both entered of Pembroke College: it is uncertain, however, notwithstanding a previous promise of support, whether Johnson received any pecuniary assistance from Mr. Corbet; at least, his poverty, which, during his short residence at college, was sometimes extreme, seems strongly to indicate a disgraceful failure on the part of his supposed friend.

His studies whilst at Oxford were, as they had hitherto been, vigorous, but unmethodical.

What he read *solidly* at Oxford, he told Mr. Boswell, was Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little epigram; that the study of which he was the most fond was metaphysicks, but he had not read much, even in that way. What materially contributed to produce irregularity both in his manners and literary pursuits, was the insufficiency of his tutor, Mr. Jorden, who, though a man of moral worth, possessed no abilities of a superior kind; and while Johnson loved the man, he held his literature in contempt. The consequence of this was, a neglect of his stated duties and attendance, and an attempt to seduce others into the same conduct. "I have heard from some of his contemporaries," relates Dr. Percy, "that he was generally seen lounging at the college-gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the college discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled."

It must not be inferred, however, from this account, that he neglected the cultivation of his intellectual powers; he was, in fact, during the three years which he spent at Pembroke College, an intense, though desultory reader, and stored

up a vast fund of useful and varied knowledge. He was, also, highly esteemed in the university, for his facility and harmony in the composition of Latin verse, to which, from an early period, at school, he had been strongly attached. A translation of Pope's Messiah into Latin hexameters, performed at the request of Mr. Jorden for a Christmas exercise, was the first production of Johnson's which was published; his father, with an excusable vanity, having printed it at Lichfield without the consent of his son, and it afterwards appeared in a Poetical Miscellany at Oxford, in 1731. With this version Pope was so much delighted, that he returned a copy of it to Mr. Arbuthnot, with this declaration: "the author will leave it a question to posterity, whether his poem or mine be the original." It is, indeed, a performance, which, from the dignity and melody of the versification, and the ease and accuracy with which the ideas of the original are transfused, merits much applause.

For mathematics and physics, Johnson appears to have had little relish; theology, ethics, and philosophy, were his favourite departments, and in these he made great progress during his academical life. In religion his opinions had been very lax and unsettled; and it was not until the accidental perusal of "Law's Serious Call to

the Unconverted," whilst at Oxford, that he entered earnestly into the inquiry. He took up Law, he relates, expecting to find it a very dull book, and with a view of ridiculing it; but he soon discovered that the author was an overmatch for him; and from this era, piety, sincere though often gloomy, was a predominant feature in his character.

It was about this period, likewise, while spending the college vacation at Lichfield, and in his twentieth year, that he was first violently attacked with that hypochondriac affection from which, during the residue of life, he was seldom altogether free. Like Cowper, though by no means in so intense a degree, his judgment was frequently subjected to the partial influence of a disordered imagination. In the former instance, a permanent derangement of many years was, unhappily, the result; but, in the latter, no shade of insanity was ever produced; for, though often languid and inefficient to such a degree, that he sometimes could not distinguish the hour upon the town clock, yet was he always able to correct, though he could not preclude, the aberrations of fancy. The apprehension of approaching insanity, in a great measure the unavoidable consequence of morbid sensation, was the ingredient in Johnson's cup which poisoned the blessings of life. He

endured, however, with pious resignation, though in gloom and horror; and often exhibited, in his worst paroxysms of dejection, the most astonishing efforts of mental power. Of this he gave a remarkable proof in his first sufferance under the complaint, by drawing up a statement of his case, with so much judgment, perspicuity, and eloquence, that Dr. Swinfen of Lichfield, to whom it was addressed, inconsiderately and indelicately circulated it among his friends, as an instance of extraordinary sagacity and research; a proceeding which so much and so justly offended his patient, that the Doctor, though his godfather, was never perfectly forgiven.

He returned to college, however, in the year 1730, in tolerable health, and continued to avail himself of its numerous opportunities for literary research, until the autumn of 1731; when, no longer able to support himself in the university, owing to the distressed circumstances of his father, who had become insolvent, he returned to Lichfield without a degree, destitute with regard to pecuniary resources, and totally undetermined what plan of life he should pursue. Soon after this event, in December 1731, his father died, in the seventy-ninth year of his age; and the share of his effects, which, after providing for his mother, he received on his decease, did not

amount to more than twenty pounds. The spirit and independence of Johnson, however, were not to be shaken by the pressure of adversity; and the following note, which is copied from his diary, exhibits, on this occasion, a high tone of fortitude and virtue. "1732, Junii 15. Undecim aureos deposui, quodie, quidquid ante matris ponus (quod serum sit precor) de paternis bonis sperare licet, viginti scilicet libras, accepi. Usque adeo mihi mea fortuna pingenda est interea, et ne paupertate vires animi languescant, ne in flagitia egestas adigat, cavendum."

Thus situated, it became necessary to adopt some plan for immediate subsistence; and he, therefore, readily embraced the offer of officiating as under-master of the grammar-school at Market-Bosworth, in Leicestershire. To this place he went on foot, on the sixteenth of July, 1732; but, owing to the pride and insolence of Sir Wolstan Dixie, the patron of the seminary, and in whose house he resided as a kind of domestic chaplain, he speedily relinquished the engagement, nor could he ever reflect on the few months that were spent in this situation, without the most marked abhorrence.

At this juncture, he received and accepted an invitation from a Mr. Hector, who had formerly been his school-fellow, and who was now practising

as a Surgeon at Birmingham, to spend a few months with him as his guest. This gentleman then lodged with Mr. Warren, a bookseller of eminence in that city, and who finding Johnson a man of literature, obtained from him some periodical essays for insertion in a newspaper, of which he was proprietor; these are, it is said, no longer in existence.

After a residence of six months with Mr. Hector, and wishing still to enjoy the solace of his society and advice, he took lodgings of a Mr. Jarvis in another part of the town; and here, at the solicitation of his friend, and Mr. Warren, he translated and abridged *Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia* from the French of the Abbé Le Grand. For this work, a considerable portion of which was dictated to Mr. Hector as Johnson lay in bed, he received from Mr. Warren but five guineas; a sum, that with all allowances for the value of money at the period in question, must be considered as miserably inadequate to the time and labour which were bestowed. The book was printed in octavo at Birmingham, but published anonymously in London in 1735 by Bettesworth and Hitch, of Pater-noster Row.

To the narrative of Lobo, which details the fruitless efforts of a company of Portuguese missionaries to convert the natives of Abyssinia to

the church of Rome, Le Grand has added an account of the final expulsion of the Jesuits from that country, and fifteen dissertations on the history, religion, manners, &c. of Abyssinia. To the whole Johnson has prefixed a preface, and a dedication in the name of his bookseller to John Warren, Esq. of Pembrokeshire. The production is remarkable on two accounts; as the first prose composition of Johnson, and as containing a relation of the discovery of the head of the Nile.

In the version itself, there are no traces of the style which Johnson subsequently assumed; all is unaffected and plain, and in correspondence with the tone of the original; but the preface and dedication display, in several instances, the rudiments of that structure of sentence, and mode of expression, for which the author was afterwards so celebrated. The Voyage to Abyssinia is very interesting, nor can there be any doubt, that, with regard to the discovery of the fountains of the Nile, Mr. Bruce has been anticipated completely; but, according to Mr. Murray, the very accurate and learned editor of Bruce's Travels, not by Lobo, but by Pedro Paez, a Portuguese missionary, whose description of the sources was published by Kercher, and by Isaac Vossius, and copied by Lobo, and who better than a century

and a half ago described accurately what our modern adventurer, under the stimulating idea of a first explorer, endured so many dangers and fatigues to witness.* It is likewise probable, as Mr. Boswell has suggested, that Johnson's attention to the version of Le Grand might have induced him, many years afterwards, to place the chief scene of his Rasselas in Abyssinia.

Shortly after the completion of his translation, and in the commencement of the year 1734, he returned to Lichfield; but seeing the necessity of recurring to his pen for subsistence, he issued proposals, in the August following, for an edition of the Latin Poems of Politian, to be published by subscription, and intituled *Angeli Politiani Poemata Latina, quibus notas, cum historia Latinæ poeseos, a Petrarchæ ævo ad Politiani tempora deducta et vita Politiani fusius quam antehac*

* The question whether Mr. Bruce ever actually visited the sources in Geesh, is finally settled by the industry of Mr. Murray, who has discovered the journal of Mr. Bruce's sole companion to the fountains, Balugnani the Italian. "This manuscript is in Italian, in Balugnani's hand-writing, on the smooth cream-coloured cotton paper of the east. It contains a complete detail of the hours and days in which they travelled; of the villages, rivers, mountains, and, in short, of every remarkable object they met with, from their leaving Gondar on Sunday 28th of October, 1770, at half after nine A. M. till their return, Sunday 18th of November, one o'clock P. M. in the same year."

enarrata addidit SAM. JOHNSON. Though the volume was to contain thirty sheets in octavo, and was offered at the very moderate price of five shillings, so few were the subscribers, that the editor, apprehensive of an insufficient sale, thought it prudent to relinquish the design.

The failure of this scheme, the lovers of learning have reason to lament; a history of Latin poetry from the age of Petrarch to the time of Politian, would, from the pen of Johnson, have been a most valuable accession to our stock of literary information; nor would the life of Politian, written, as the editor intended, at large, have been less fertile in interest, as few of those who flourished during the revival of literature possess equal claims to our notice and applause. Of the poems of Politian, the *Nutricia* is the most elegant and pleasing; for, as the author asserts in one of his epistles, *historiam continet omnium ferè vatum;* it was his intention, had not death at the age of forty prematurely closed all his views, to have accompanied it with an extensive commentary; and an edition, thus illustrated, would, if conducted by a man of taste and various reading, be still a most acceptable labour. The *Miscellanea* and *Epistolæ* of Politian highly merit, likewise, a republication.*

* In an elegant preface by Bishop Atterbury to a little

On his proposals proving abortive, Johnson returned to Birmingham, and from that place addressed a letter to Mr. Cave, editor of the Gentleman's Magazine, offering to assist him, on reasonable terms, in conducting that miscellany, by the contribution of poems, inscriptions, literary dissertations, and critical remarks on authors ancient and modern. The offer was gladly accepted by Cave, who was now struggling to push his valuable compilation into notice. It may readily be supposed, however, that the profits arising from such an engagement could not be considerable, and Johnson, therefore, found it necessary to look around him for further support;

volume which he published in 1684, entitled *Anthologia seu selecta quædam Poemata Italorum qui Latine scripserunt*, is the following very terse but just and admirable critique on the literary character of Politian. "Politianus eo successu quo vix alter quisquam eruditorum, humaniores literas excoluit: In soluta autem oratione, quam ligata, longe felicior.—Ingenio ad omnia ferebatur vivido, vegetoque. Effusus tamen, et exultans, et Lucano quam Maroni similior, sententiarum ubique pompam studiose conquisivit; quas tractu numerorum plus æquo excurrentium productas aculcatis, ut plurimum, finibus concludere voluit. Quod consilium rebus in medio dicendi genere positis prout Rusticum ejus oportuit fuisse, haud ita belle conveniet. At multa in eo venuste dicta reperias, et digna quantivis pretii; quæ si criticorum examini subjicientur, in pleriscque se præbeant æstimanda."

he accordingly tendered his assistance as an usher to the Rev. Mr. Budworth, master of the grammar-school at Brerewood, in Staffordshire, but was rejected, from an apprehension on the part of Mr. Budworth, that the involuntary contractions to which Johnson had, from an early period, been subjected, might excite ridicule, and at length even imitation, in the boys committed to his care.

What his literature and talents failed to obtain, love in some degree effected. Johnson, though by no means calculated, by the graces of his person or manner, to conciliate the favour of the female sex, was of an amatory constitution; he had felt, even at school, the tumults of the tender passion, and had fallen deeply in love with a young quaker of the name of Olivia Lloyd; some years after, at Lichfield, he was equally attracted by the charms of Lucy Porter; and in the year 1735, he became, at Birmingham, an ardent admirer and the husband of the mother of the lady last mentioned. She was the widow of a Mr. Henry Porter, a mercer, double her lover's age, and, according to the description of Garrick, by no means peculiarly inviting in her person; she had, however, in her possession about eight hundred pounds; and to Johnson this, in his present circumstances, was an object of important

consideration; it is not, however, to be inferred that he married merely from pecuniary motives; from his Prayers and Meditations, and from the epitaph which he wrote to record her memory, it is evident that he thought her beautiful, and that he was sincerely and ardently attached to her. They were married at Derby, on the 9th of July, 1736; and with the view of employing his wife's money to the best advantage, he took a large house at Edial, near Lichfield, and opened an academy for classical education. The design, however, did not succeed, though patronized by Mr. Walmsley, and duly advertised;* he obtained, indeed, but three pupils, the celebrated David Garrick, then eighteen years of age, whose father lived at Lichfield, his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, the son of a gentleman of fortune and consequence in the county. Of the leisure of Johnson, which of course was, at this time, considerable, a great part was employed in the composition of his Irene; and, as a book of entertainment and relaxation, and, at the same time, of multifarious and recondite learning, he had recourse to Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, of which he has affirmed, that "it was the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise."

* In the Gentleman's Magazine for 1736, p. 418.

The prospect of succeeding in his academy growing every day less promising, Johnson at length determined to try his fortune in the metropolis, persuaded that there, if any where, genius and talents would meet their due reward. It is remarkable, that his friend and pupil, David Garrick, had conceived a similar design; and in March 1737, these successful candidates for fame in their respective, though widely different, departments, reached London together. They were introduced by a letter from Mr. Walmsley to a Mr. Colson, a mathematician, and master of an academy, with the information that Johnson was "to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French." Of the tragedy, however, only three acts were written; and as the finances of the poet were such as would shortly demand a recruit, it became essential, in the mean time, to obtain some productive engagement. With this view, having taken lodgings at Greenwich, he sent a letter, subscribed with his own name, and dated July 12th, 1737, to Mr. Cave, in which he proposed to translate the History of the Council of Trent, by Paul Sarpi, from a late French version by Dr. Le Courayer, whose copious notes he thought could not fail of procuring to the work a favourable reception.

The offer was accepted; but Johnson, averse to the labour of translating, soon meditated other plans, nor was the task commenced until August 2d, 1738; when, after printing twelve quarto sheets, for which he had received of Cave forty-nine pounds, seven shillings, the design was given up, in consequence of a very singular rivalship; for another Mr. Samuel Johnson, librarian and curate of St. Martin's in the Fields, having engaged in the same laborious undertaking, under the patronage of Dr. Zachary Pearce, and the clergy, the interest exerted for the rival versions proved destructive to both, and, after some skirmishing between the two translators, the attempt was mutually relinquished. Notwithstanding the high character to which the history of Sarpi is justly entitled, it cannot, I think, be lamented that Johnson should, by this accident, have been compelled to change his plan of literary exertion, and to substitute original for translated composition.

Soon after his application to Cave in July, 1737, our author returned to Lichfield, with the double purpose of visiting his wife, and finishing his tragedy. Here, after three months additional labour, the latter was completed, and he once more removed to town, accompanied by Mrs. Johnson, and high in expectation of beholding

his *Irene* on the stage. His hopes, however, were bitterly disappointed; Mr. Fleetwood, the manager of Drury-lane Theatre, (though strongly solicited in its favour,) rejected his tragedy; and his scheme of support from this quarter was, for a time, completely annihilated.

In this situation, his thoughts reverted to Mr. Cave; he now became a regular coadjutor in the conduct of his monthly publication, and for several years, indeed, derived his chief means of support from the assistance which he imparted to this celebrated periodical pamphlet. His first known contribution to the Gentleman's Magazine is dated March, 1738, and consists of a very beautiful Latin Ode *Ad Urbanum*, in which he compliments the editor in a style of great elegance and ingenuity.

About two months after this address to Mr. Urban, the poetical powers of Johnson were exhibited to the world in all their strength, by the publication of his *London*, a poem in imitation of the third satire of Juvenal. It appeared on the same morning with Pope's satire, entituled "1738," and immediately attracted so many readers, that a second edition was required in the course of a week. Dodsley purchased the entire property of this poem for ten guineas, a sum certainly disproportioned to the merit of the

work; but if the author's pecuniary reward was not great, the reputation which he acquired by the effort, must have equalled his most sanguine expectations. It was praised wherever it was read; and, what more particularly must have delighted Johnson, it was praised by Pope, who, having for some time in vain solicitously endeavoured to discover the new poet, is said to have declared, that "whoever he was, he would soon be *deterré*."

As this spirited imitation of Juvenal forms an epoch in our author's literary life, and is one of his best *poetical* productions, I shall consider it as introductory to an uninterrupted consideration of his compositions in this branch, and to a discussion of his general character as a POET; and this plan I shall pursue with regard to the other numerous departments of literature in which he excelled, and according to the order in which the first in merit of a class shall in succession rise to view; persuaded that, by this mode, the monotony arising from a stricter chronological detail of his various writings, the arrangement hitherto adopted by his biographers, may, in a great measure, be obviated.

Of the three imitators of the third satire of the Roman poet, Boileau, Oldham, and Johnson, the latter is, by many degrees, the most vigorous

and poetical. No man, indeed, was better calculated to transfuse the stern invective, the sublime philosophy, and nervous painting of Juvenal, than our author; and his *London*, whilst it rivals the original in these respects, is, at the same time, greatly superior to it in purity of illustration, and harmony of versification. The felicity with which he has adapted the imagery and allusions of the Latin poem to modern manners, vices, and events; and the richness and depth of thought which he exhibits when the hint is merely taken from the Roman bard, or when he chooses altogether to desert him, are such as to render this satire the noblest moral poem in our language.

At the period when Johnson wrote his *London*, he must, from his peculiar circumstances, have been prone to imbibe all the warmth and indignation of the ancient satirist, who depicts in the boldest colours the unmerited treatment to which indigence is subjected, and the multiform oppressions arising from tyranny and ill-acquired wealth. He was, indeed, at this time, "steeped up to the lips in poverty," and was likewise a zealous opponent of what he deemed a corrupt administration. It is impossible to read the following passage, one of the finest in the poem, and especially its concluding line, which the author distinguished by capitals, without deeply entering

into, and severely sympathising with, the feelin and sufferings of the writer.

By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
This, only this, provokes the snarling muse.
The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak
Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.
Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.
Has Heaven reserv'd, in pity to the poor,
No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore?
No secret island in the boundless main?
No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd * by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
And bear oppression's insolence no more.
This mournful truth is every where confess'd,
Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd.

Of the energy and compression which chara terize the sentiment and diction of "Londor this last line is a striking example; for the ori nal, though strong in its expression, is less ter and happy:

Haud facile emergunt, quorum virtutibus obstat
Res angusta domi.

* The Spaniards had at this time laid claim to several our American provinces.

The next poem of distinguished merit which Johnson produced, was the *Prologue for the opening of Drury-lane Theatre* in 1747. His friend, and former pupil, David Garrick, had this year obtained the office of joint patentee and manager of Drury-lane; and the prologue of Johnson, whilst it traced with skill the varied fortunes of the stage and of dramatic taste, was intended as a compliment to the new manager, under whose direction it was predicted that the reign of Nature and of Sense would revive. The commencement of these verses, which delineates the genius of Shakspeare, is, in point of invention and enthusiasm, the first that *poetry* has produced upon the subject; the tribute of Gray does not exceed it. In *prose*, the portrait of our great Dramatist by Dryden was unrivalled, until Mr. Morgann, in his "Essay on the dramatic character of Sir John Falstaff," produced a delineation, the vivacity and discrimination of which demand almost unqualified praise. With what a vivid spirit of animation has he clothed the following prediction, alluding to Voltaire, who, in the arrogance of criticism, had termed the immortal poet a *barbarian!* He exclaims, "Whatever may be the neglect of some, or the censure of others, there are those who firmly believe that this wild and uncultivated *Barbarian* has not obtained

one half of his fame.—When the hand of time shall have brushed off his present editors and commentators, and when the very name of Voltaire, and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more, the Apalachian mountains, the banks of the Ohio, and the plains of Sciola, shall resound with the accents of this *Barbarian*. In his native tongue he shall roll the genuine passions of nature; nor shall the griefs of Lear be alleviated, or the charms and wit of Rosalind be abated, by time."

In the commencement of the year 1749, nearly eleven years after the production of his "London," our author published his second imitation of the Roman Satirist, entituled *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, being the tenth satire of Juvenal imitated. For this poem, though his literary fame had considerably increased in the space which had elapsed between the two performances, he received from Dodsley but fifteen guineas. If with this sum, for a piece of no great length, he was satisfied, he certainly was not, and had no reason to be, with the general remuneration of his labours; and in the poem before us, he has drawn in one line, and in his strongest manner, the usual fate of literary labour:

> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause awhile from letters, to be wise;

There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the gaol.

The *Vanity of Human Wishes*, the subject of which is in a great degree founded on the ALCIBIADES of PLATO, possesses not the point and fire which animates the "London." It breathes, however, a strain of calm and dignified philosophy, much more pleasing to the mind, and certainly much more consonant to truth, than the party exaggeration of the prior satire. The poet's choice of modern examples, in place of those brought forward by the ancient bard, is happy and judicious; and he has every where availed himself, and in a style the most impressive, of the solemnity, the pathos, and sublime morality of the christian code. In consequence of this substitution of a purer system of ethics, and of a striking selection of characters, among which that of Charles of Sweden is conspicuously eminent, the whole has the air of an original, and, to be understood, requires not to be collated with its prototype.

To enter into competition with the tenth satire of Juvenal, which is, without doubt, the most perfect composition of its author, was a daring and a hazardous attempt. Dryden had led the way, and, though occasionally successful, has failed to equal the general merit of the Latin poem. The imitation of Johnson, on the

contrary, may be said to vie with the Roman in every line, and in some instances to surpass the original; particularly in the sketch of Charles, and in the conclusion of the satire, which, though nobly moral as it is in the page of Juvenal, is greatly heightened by the pen of Johnson, and forms one of the finest lessons of piety and resignation discoverable in the works of any uninspired writer. After reprobating the too frequent folly of our wishes and our prayers, it is enquired of the poet whether we shall upon no occasion implore the mercy of the skies; he replies,

Inquirer, cease; petitions yet remain,
Which heav'n may hear, nor deem religion vain.
Still raise for good the supplicating voice,
But leave to heav'n the measure and the choice.
Safe in his pow'r, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer;
Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,
Secure whate'er he gives, he gives the best.
Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
Obedient passions, and a will resign'd,
For love, which scarce collective man can fill;
For patience, sov'reign o'er transmuted ill;
For faith, that, panting for a happier seat,
Counts death kind nature's signal of retreat:
These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,
These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;
With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,
And makes the happiness she does not find.

The month succeeding the publication of "The Vanity of Human Wishes," witnessed the crisis of our poet's dramatic fame; on the 6th of February, 1749, *Irene* was brought upon the stage, after being submitted, though with great reluctance by the author, to the alterations which Garrick, from his knowledge of stage effect, had very properly suggested. Yet, though the whole force of the theatre was employed on the occasion, and no direct interruption was given to the representation, it was tolerated but nine nights, and then vanished from the theatre for ever.

It is somewhat singular, that Johnson, who has pointed out with so much judgment and precision the defects of Addison's *Cato*, and, in his Prologue on the opening of Drury-lane Theatre, has censured the dramatic poetry of the eighteenth century, as substituting declamation for passion, should have himself produced a tragedy more frigid and declamatory, than perhaps any drama in the annals of the English stage. Irene can boast of a strict adherence to the unities; of harmonious versification; of diction vigorous and splendid; of sentiment morally correct and philosophically beautiful; but its fable is without interest, its characters without discrimination, and neither terror nor pity is excited.

If it fail, however, as a drama, in delineating

the ebullitions of passion, it will, as a series of ethic dialogues, replete with striking observations on human conduct, and rich in poetic expression, be long studied and admired in the closet. No one of the productions of Johnson, indeed, was more carefully elaborated than his Irene; and, though commenced at an early period of life, no one more evidently discovers his exclusive love of moral philosophy, and his ample store of nervous and emphatic language.

Of the numerous passages which illustrate this remark, and which, for their moral excellence, should dwell upon the memory, I shall in this place adduce two, in conception and in execution alike happy. Demetrius, addressing the aged Visier Cali on the dangers of protracting the blow which he intended until the morrow, exclaims,

> To-morrow's action! can that hoary wisdom,
> Borne down with years, still doat upon to-morrow!
> That fatal mistress of the young, the lazy,
> The coward, and the fool, condemn'd to lose
> An useless life in waiting for to-morrow,
> To gaze with longing eyes upon to-morrow,
> Till interposing death destroys the prospect!
> Strange! that this gen'ral fraud from day to day
> Should fill the world with wretches undetected.
> The soldier, lab'ring through a winter's march,
> Still sees to-morrow drest in robes of triumph;
> Still to the lover's long-expecting arms,
> To-morrow brings the visionary bride.

But thou, too old to bear another cheat,
Learn, that the present hour alone is man's.

Aspasia, reprobating the ambition and meditated apostacy of Irene, endeavours to reconcile her mind to the loss of life, rather than of virtue and religion, and bids her

Reflect that life and death, affecting sounds!
Are only varied modes of endless being;
Reflect that life, like ev'ry other blessing,
Derives its value from its use alone;
Not for itself, but for a nobler end,
Th' Eternal gave it, and that end is virtue.
When inconsistent with a greater good,
Reason commands to cast the less away;
Thus life, with loss of wealth, is well preserv'd,
And virtue cheaply sav'd with loss of life.

In act the first, scene the second, is a passage which has been frequently and justly admired; it is put into the mouth of the Visier Cali, who, execrating the miseries of arbitrary power, alludes to a report which he had received, of the nicely balanced structure of the British Constitution.

If there be any land, as fame reports,
Where common laws restrain the prince and subject,
A happy land, where circulating pow'r
Flows through each member of th' embodied state;
Sure, not unconscious of the mighty blessing,
Her grateful sons shine bright with ev'ry virtue;
Untainted with the LUST OF INNOVATION,

Sure all unite to hold her league of rule
Unbroken as the sacred chain of nature,
That links the jarring elements in peace.

"These are British sentiments," remarks Mr. Murphy; "above forty years ago, they found an echo in the breast of applauding audiences; and to this hour they are the voice of the people, in defiance of the *metaphysics* and the *new lights* of certain politicians, who would gladly find their private advantage in the disasters of their country; a race of men, *quibus nulla ex honesto spes.*"*

It is worthy of remark, that Cicero, more than eighteen hundred years ago, seems to have pointed out with great precision the constituent parts of the British Constitution. In theory, at least, the ancients appear to have been well aware of the value of a mixed constitution; and though they had not the happiness of seeing the fabric realized, and probably considered such an event as altogether impracticable, they had the merit, however, of conceiving and depicting the blessing. How closely, in the following fragment, does the great philosopher approximate to that constitution, which, long after Rome had ceased to exist as the capital of the world, was to rise an unrivalled monument of the aggregate wisdom of

* Murphy's Essay on the Life and Genius of Johnson, p. 153.

Britain! *Statuo esse optime constitutam rempublicam*, QUÆ EX TRIBUS GENERIBUS ILLIS, REGALI, OPTIMO, ET POPULARI CONFUSA MODICE, *nec puniendo irritet animum immanem ac fèrum, nec omnia præter mittendo, licentia cives deteriores reddat.**

After the four capital poems that we have just noticed, a fifth may be brought forward, which, in its kind, approaches much nearer to perfection than any of the preceding; I allude to the stanzas *On the Death of Mr. Robert Levet*, the constant companion of Johnson at his morning's meal, for near forty years. This reserved but most amiable man was a practitioner in physic among the lower orders of people in London; his fees were very small, but his business so extensive, that his walk was frequently from Houndsditch to Marybone; he lived, however, in great obscurity, though perpetually and conscientiously employed in mitigating the sorrows of poverty and disease.

The stanzas on this man of great but humble utility are beyond all praise. The wonderful powers of Johnson were never shewn to greater advantage than on this occasion, where the subject, from its obscurity and mediocrity, seemed to bid defiance to poetical efforts; it is, in fact, warm from the heart, and is the only poem from

* Ex M. Tullii Ciceronis De Republica, libro 2.

the pen of Johnson that has been bathed with tears. Would to God, that on every medical man who attends the poor, the following encomiums could be justly passed!

Well tried through many a varying year,
See Levet to the grave descend;
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of ev'ry friendless name the friend.

When fainting nature call'd for aid,
And hov'ring death prepar'd the blow,
His vig'rous remedy display'd
The pow'r of art without the show.

In Mis'ry's darkest cavern known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless Anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely Want retir'd to die.

How boldly painted, how exquisitely pathetic, as a description of the sufferings of human life, is this last stanza! I am acquainted with nothing superior to it in the productions of the moral muse.

Of the residue of the English poetry of Johnson, the greater portion consists of lyric effusions; a department in which he did not possess the requisites for excellence. He wanted enthusiasm for the higher ode, and gaiety for the lesser; in his perception of the beauties of nature, also, he was defective; and his odes on the seasons are, with respect to description, lifeless copies of

traditionary imagery; that on *Winter* is the best, and this, though written with vivacity, is but a transcript from Horace. The *Address to Friendship* is of the moral species of ode, and therefore better adapted to his powers; in its sentiment it is tender and correct; in its diction elegant and beautiful. His *Evening, an Ode,* furnishes also a pleasing proof that the severe moralist occasionally felt, and could adequately describe, the influence of female charms; he thus, in a strain of voluptuous delicacy, addresses his beloved Stella:

> the Queen of Night,
> Round us pours a lambent light;
> Light that seems but just to show
> Breasts that beat, and cheeks that glow.

To the English poetry of Johnson, may now be added a very beautiful translation of some noble lines from the Medea of Euripides. It has escaped all the editors of his works, and was very lately introduced to the world in a volume of considerable merit, entituled "Translations from the Greek Anthology, with Tales and Miscellaneous Poems." A parody, indeed, by our author upon this passage of the Grecian poet was published by Mrs. Piozzi in her "Anecdotes," but it is of little value, while the following version has preserved all the elegance and pathos of the original.

Med. Eurip. v. 190.

The rites deriv'd from ancient days,
With thoughtless reverence we praise;
The rites that taught us to combine
The joys of music and of wine;
That bade the feast, the song, the bowl,
O'erfill the saturated soul;
But ne'er the lute nor lyre applied,
To soothe Despair or soften Pride,
Nor call'd them to the gloomy cells
Where Madness raves and Vengeance swells,
Where Hate sits musing to betray,
And Murder meditates his prey.
To dens of guilt and shades of care,
Ye sons of melody, repair,
Nor deign the festive hour to cloy
With superfluity of joy;
The board with varied plenty crown'd
May spare the luxury of sound.

Of this exquisite morsel of Euripides, D Joseph Warton has likewise attempted an imit tion, which possesses, in a striking degree, t tender sentiment of the tragedian, clothed versification of the sweetest melody. I sha transcribe it for the gratification of my reade and in order that they may compare it with t more literal copy of Johnson.

Queen of ev'ry moving measure,
Sweetest source of purest pleasure,
Music! why thy pow'rs employ
Only for the sons of joy;

Only for the smiling guests
At natal or at nuptial feasts?
Rather thy lenient numbers pour
On those whom secret griefs devour.
Bid be still the throbbing hearts
Of those whom death or absence parts,
And with some softly whisper'd air
Smoothe the brow of dumb despair.

Of the *Poemata* of Johnson, I know not that much can be said; like Milton, Addison, and Gray, he was, in early life, partial to Latin metrical composition; but he has failed to rival the triumvirate. To the first and last he is inferior in originality, a character with difficulty obtained in the fetters of classical versification; to the second in the grace and suavity of his numbers. The best and most interesting poem in the collection, is that entituled Γνωθι σεαυτον; as it paints, in colours equally strong and vivid, the peculiar features of his own mind and character, and will, therefore, in a future stage of this work, attract more of our notice. Next in merit to this effusion, we may place his lyric compositions, of which the odes under the appellation of "Skia," and "Ode De Skia Insula," are the most valuable.

To the two specimens of Greek poetry that we possess from the pen of our author, and which are addressed to Dr. Birch, and Mrs. Carter, a

third has been just annexed by the translator from the Greek Anthology. It is an epigram which the doctor had formed and condensed from his own Latin epitaph on his friend Goldsmith, and runs thus:

Τον ταφον 'εισοραας τον 'Ολιβαριοιο Κονιην
Αφροσι μη σεμνην Ξειν ποδεσσι παΐει.
'Οισι μεμηλε φυσις, μετρων χαρις, εργα παλαιων,
Κλαιετε ποιητην, ἱςοριχον, φυσικον.

I add the version of the ingenious communicator of these lines.

Thou see'st the tomb of Oliver: retire,
Unholy feet, nor o'er his ashes tread.
Ye whom the deeds of old, verse, nature, fire,
Mourn nature's priest, the bard, historian, dead.

Had the fame of Johnson rested entirely on his poetical productions, he would not have descended to posterity with the lustre which now surrounds his name. As a moral and satiric bard, indeed, his merit is considerable; but to the enthusiasm which characterizes the higher branches of the art, he has no pretensions. He was a disciple of the school of Dryden and Pope, and successfully emulated their excellencies, as far as harmony of versification, and pointed and splendid diction, could enable him to effect his design; but he is infinitely inferior to the former in ease and variety

of melody, and to both in the energies of imagination. I speak merely of his poetry; for in his prose works he has exhibited a much wider range of fancy.

Of that wonderful exuberance of invention, of that inexhaustible fertility in the combination of ideas, of those creative powers, which burn with such a vivid flame in the strains of Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton, we find few, if any, traces in the poetry of Johnson. That he had a strong conception, indeed, of the mighty genius of Shakspeare, may be drawn from the opening of his celebrated prologue; but that he had no relish for those wild and exquisite flashes of fancy which shoot with such unrivalled brilliancy along every line of Comus and the Tempest, is too indisputably evident from the tenor of his critical writings. The morbid melancholy which pressed so heavily on his soul, might have a considerable share in producing this insensibility; but, independent of any constitutional failing, he was a systematic contemner of all in poetry that had not a direct practical tendency; hence his compositions in that department, are entirely of this description, and his two satires, and his verses on the death of Levett, are finished models of the kind.

If we compare him as a poet with Addison,

and the comparison is naturally suggested by the similar walks of literature in which they were engaged, it must be acknowledged, that, if all consideration of dramatic genius be excepted, he was greatly superior to his illustrious predecessor. There is a want of nerve, both in the diction and versification of the miscellaneous poetry of Addison, which has deprived him of what would otherwise have been his rank among our bards; while the never-failing vigour and compression of Johnson, united with very correct and splendid versification, have justly given him a high station in the *third* class of English poets; a station to which, from the defects that we have alluded to, Addison is precluded a claim.

Great, however, as were the merits of his "London," his first and noblest poem, it was productive of little advantage to him in a pecuniary light; and, willing to escape from the necessity of writing for bread, he endeavoured to avail himself, in the year 1738, of the offer of the mastership of the free-school at Appleby, in Leicestershire. It was required, however, by the statutes of the school, that this situation should be filled by a Master of Arts, and a difficulty occurred as to the mode of obtaining this degree. Pope very generously, without any personal knowledge of our author, and stimulated merely

by the merits of his "London," recommended him to Lord Gower, by whom a letter was written to a friend of Swift, with the view of engaging the Dean's interest in procuring the necessary degree from Trinity-College, Dublin. Swift, however, it is said, declined interfering in the business, and Johnson was finally disappointed of the mastership; a failure which must now be considered by the literary world as a subject of congratulation; for had his solicitations succeeded, there is every reason to suppose, that his life might have been one uniform scene of obscure and uninteresting employment.

He likewise attempted, soon after this unsuccessful application, to obtain an introduction, as an advocate, to the bar of Doctors' Commons. Dr. Adams exerted his interest for him, on this occasion, and consulted Dr. Smalbroke, of the Commons, whether he was admissible to practice without the formality of the doctor's degree in civil law. This dignity, however, being considered as indispensable, Johnson was compelled to relinquish also this pursuit, and to revert to literature as his profession.

It is distressing to reflect, that at this period his poverty was probably so great, that he was sometimes obliged to pass the day without food; at least, in one of his letters addressed this year

to Mr. Cave, he confesses his inability to purchase a dinner, by affixing the signature *Impransus*; and Mr. Cumberland, in his late interesting Memoirs of his own Life, observes, that "the variety we find in his (Johnson's) writings, was not the variety of choice arising from the impulse of his proper genius, but tasks imposed upon him by the dealers in ink, and contracts on his part submitted to in satisfaction of the pressing calls of hungry want; for, painful as it is to relate, I have heard that illustrious scholar assert, (and he never varied from the truth of fact,) that *he subsisted himself for a considerable space of time, upon the scanty pittance of four-pence halfpenny per day.* How melancholy," he remarks, "to reflect, that his vast trunk and stimulating appetite, were to be supported by what will barely feed the weaned infant."

Under circumstances such as these, he was willing to embrace any reputable opportunity of employing his pen, and he became, as we have already remarked, a regular and powerful contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine. On the pieces which he wrote for this miscellany, consisting principally of biographical and political matter, we shall have occasion shortly to expatiate; in the mean time, we shall consider our author in the character which he assumed in

1742, and in his thirty-third year, when he appeared before the public as a BIBLIOGRAPHER.

Large collections of books, which are so essentially necessary to the interests of literature, would, however, prove of little utility, were they not properly classed and arranged, and their contents made familiar to the public. "By the means of catalogues only can it be known," remarks Johnson, "what has been written on every part of learning; and the hazard avoided of encountering difficulties which have already been cleared, discussing questions which have already been decided, and digging in mines of literature which former ages have exhausted."* For the task of forming what the French term a *catalogue raisonné*, no man was better qualified than Johnson; his ruling passion was the love of books, and his memory was in a very extraordinary degree capacious and retentive; "it was wonderful to see," observes one of his biographers, "when he took up a book, with what eagerness he perused, and with what haste his eye travelled over it: he has been known to read a volume, and that not a small one, at a sitting; nor was he inferior in the power of memory to *Antonio Magliabechi:* whatever he read, became his own for ever, with all the advantages that a penetrating

* Account of the Harleian Library, Murphy's edition.

judgment and deep reflection could add to it. I have heard him repeat with scarcely a mistake of a word, passages from favourite authors, of three or four octavo pages in length." *

* Hawkins's Life of Johnson, p. 16, 2d edition.

"The most extraordinary example of the power of memory in this, or perhaps in any country, was the celebrated Jedediah Buxton. He was able, by his memory alone, to answer the most difficult arithmetical questions that could be proposed; of which the following are a few specimens.

"He was asked, in a field 351 yards long, and 261 yards wide, how many acres there were. In eleven minutes he replied, 18 acres, 3 roods, 28 perches, and 14 remained.

"A second question put to him was, suppose sound moves 1142 feet in one second of time, how long after the firing of a cannon, could the same be heard at the distance of five miles? In about a quarter of an hour he replied, 23 seconds, 7 thirds, and 46 remained.

"A third question was, if I set 3584 plants in rows four feet asunder, and the plants seven feet apart, in a rectangular piece of ground, how much land will the plants take up? In half an hour he said, 2 acres, 1 rood, $8\frac{1}{2}$ perches.

"The following was the hardest question ever proposed to him. What dimensions must I give my joiner to make a cubical corn-bin, that shall hold just a quarter of malt, Winchester measure? In an hour's time he replied, it would be a little more than $25\frac{3}{4}$ inches on a side, and that 26 inches would be too much.—All which answers are as true and correct as possible."

Vide Beloe's Aulus Gellius, vol. 2, p. 125, 126.

It was with singular propriety, therefore, that he was selected by Osborne, a bookseller in Gray's Inn, to form a descriptive catalogue of the immense library of the Earl of Oxford, which he had purchased on the Earl's death, at the price of thirteen thousand pounds; a sum totally inadequate to the value of the collection; the mere binding of which, as Oldys declared, had even cost more than was now given for the entire library. The catalogue, as projected by Osborne, was to consist of five octavo volumes, at five shillings each, and to be entituled *Bibliotheca Harleiana;* only four volumes of the work, however, merit this title, the fifth being entirely occupied by an enumeration of the bookseller's old stock.

In this laborious undertaking, Johnson was slightly assisted by Mattaire, then one of the masters of Westminster school, and the chief author of the *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum Angliæ et Hiberniæ;* who furnished him with some hints for the classification, and supplied the Latin dedication to Lord Carteret. Dr. Oldys also is believed to have had a share in the construction of the catalogue, but the portion which he contributed has not been well ascertained.

To engage the attention of the learned, and to induce them to become purchasers of the

catalogue, our author issued proposals for printing the Bibliotheca, which he afterwards, with some modification and enlargement, prefixed as a preface to the first volume of the work, in which the description of books in the Latin language was exclusively of his own composition. This preface is drawn up with great acumen and skill, and presents a very perspicuous view of the amplitude and value of the collection, and of the plan adopted for the enumeration of its contents. What he undertook to perform, was to distribute the books into distinct classes; to arrange every class with some regard to the age of the writers; to describe every volume accurately; to enumerate the peculiarities of editions, and to occasionally intersperse observations from the authors of literary history. The plan was executed with great perseverance and industry, and what Johnson allowed himself to hope in the conclusion of his preface, was fully verified; the catalogue became an object of public curiosity; it was purchased as the record of a most valuable collection, and preserved as one of the memorials of learning.*

With a view also of snatching from oblivion a number of valuable tracts and small pamphlets which were scattered through this vast library,

* Murphy's edition, vol. 2, p. 183.

Osborne employed Oldys to compile a selection of the most rare and curious, and engaged Johnson to write, as an introduction to the first volume, *An Essay on the Origin and Importance of Small Tracts and Fugitive Pieces.* This he executed, with his usual judgment and research, in the year 1744; and the selection entituled *The Harleian Miscellany*, was given to the public in 1749, in eight volumes quarto.

Though, in consequence of the publication of the Bibliotheca Harleiana, and of the Miscellany just mentioned, the utility of this splendid collection was not altogether lost, its dispersion must nevertheless be considered as a national misfortune. Had it been purchased by government, as the foundation of an extensive public library, the advantages accruing to literature from such an institution had been incalculable. Johnson was a warm friend to establishments of this kind, and, when speaking of the famous collection of editions of Horace by Douglas, gave it as his opinion, that "every man should try to collect one book in that manner, and present it to a public library."* "Nothing," remarks Mr. Beloe, "could be more honourable, or perhaps more useful to a nation, than a great national library. It may be said, that in this country

* Boswell's Johnson, vol. 4, p. 293.

such a library would be superfluous, as there exist so many valuable and curious collections. This is true, but this is not enough.—I know that many such collections exist among us, but I object that they are not sufficiently easy of access. The ingenuous pride and delicacy of a scholar, will often make him diffident of applying for books, where alone they are to be had; particularly, which is often the case, when the loan of them is considered as a great personal obligation."* It is to be hoped, that this desideratum will be in time supplied by the recent establishment of the Royal Institution, in which the library forms a very prominent part of the design.

It was the misfortune of Johnson, during the time he laboured on the Harleian Catalogue, to be connected with a bookseller, who was, in almost every respect, a disgrace to literature. Osborne was alike destitute of morality and of shame, and, having acquired by all the arts of trade a very opulent fortune, thought he had a right to treat with brutal insolence every man of genius and learning, whose poverty unhappily placed him within the sphere of his influence and power.† Our author, it has been related, whilst

* Note on book 6, chap. 17, of the Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius.

† Johnson, in his Life of Pope, says, that Osborne "was

employed in Gray's Inn, was coarsely taxed by Osborne with intentional delay; and when he endeavoured to defend himself, by affirming that it was often necessary to peruse not only the title-page, but the contents of a book, in order accurately to describe the article, the worthless Osborne enforced his opposition by giving him the lie. To this Johnson immediately replied by seizing a folio, and knocking the bookseller down. Of this account, which has been frequently repeated, part is true, and part without foundation; when the story was mentioned to Johnson, he answered, "Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop; it was in my own chamber."*

That a man of such ability and comprehension of intellect as was Johnson, should, from the compulsion of poverty, be subjected to the pride

entirely destitute of shame, without sense of any disgrace but that of poverty. He purchased a number of unsold copies of Mr. Pope's Iliad, of the folio size, printed on an inferior paper, and without cuts, and, cutting off the top and bottom margins, which were very large, had the impudence to call them the subscription books, and to vend them as such. His insolence to his customers was also frequently past bearing. If one came for a book in his catalogue, he would endeavour to force on him some new publication of his own, and, if he refused, would affront him." Hawkins's Life of Johnson, p. 150.

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 126, edit. of 1799.

and ignorance of a being like Osborne, must certainly, with every feeling mind, be a theme of perpetual regret; " with me," says Sir John Hawkins, in a strain of eloquence and pathos much beyond his usual manner, " with me it has always been a subject of melancholy reflection. In our estimation of the enjoyments of this life, we place wisdom, virtue, and learning in the first class, and riches and other adventitious gifts of fortune in the last. The natural subordination of the one to the other, we see and approve, and when that is disturbed we are sorry. How then must it affect a sensible mind to contemplate that misfortune, which could subject a man endued with a capacity for the highest offices, a philosopher, a poet, an orator, and, if fortune had so ordered, a chancellor, a prelate, a statesman, to the insolence of a mean, worthless, ignorant fellow, who had nothing to justify the superiority he exercised over a man so endowed, but those advantages which Providence indiscriminately dispenses to the worthy and the worthless! to see such a man, for the supply of food and raiment, submitting to the commands of his inferior, and, as a hireling, looking up to him for the reward of his work, and receiving it accompanied with reproach and contumely; this, I say, is a subject of melancholy reflection." *

* Hawkins's Life, p. 151.

To emancipate himself from the necessity of labouring under the direction of booksellers, Johnson had, at an early period of his literary career, projected various publications, which he conceived would at the same time extend his fame, and recruit his finances. This catalogue he continued through life to enlarge; but it cannot be recorded without regret, that of the many noble and useful designs which the list includes, not one was ever executed by him, or even commenced; it must be allowed, however, that many of the plans which he had chalked out, were of immense extent, and required the unembarrassed leisure of competence to conduct with vigour and success.

As a curious and interesting proof of great intimacy with books and general literature, I shall transcribe the catalogue, more especially as it will strongly tend to illustrate the fertility and resources of our author, under the department of which we are treating.

"DIVINITY.

1. "A small book of precepts and directions for piety, the hint taken from the directions in the Countess of Morton's (daily) exercise.

"PHILOSOPHY, HISTORY, AND LITERATURE IN GENERAL.

2. "History of Criticism, as it relates to judging

of authors, from Aristotle to the present age. An account of the rise and improvements of that art; of the different opinions of authors ancient and modern.

3. " Translation of the History of Herodian.

4. " New edition of Fairfax's Translation of Tasso, with notes, glossary, &c.

5. " Chaucer, a new edition of him, from manuscripts and old editions, with various readings, conjectures, remarks on his language and the changes it had undergone from the earliest times to his age, and from his to the present. With notes explanatory of customs, &c. and references to Boccace and other authors from whom he has borrowed, with an account of the liberties he has taken in telling the stories, his life, and an exact etymological glossary.

6. " Aristotle's Rhetoric, a translation of it into English.

7. " A Collection of Letters, translated from the modern writers, with some account of the several authors.

8. " Oldham's Poems, with notes historical and critical.

9. " Roscommon's Poems, with notes.

10. " Lives of the Philosophers, written with a polite air, in such a manner as may divert as well as instruct.

11. " History of the Heathen Mythology, with an explication of the fables, both allegorical and historical, with references to the poets.

12. " History of the State of Venice, in a compendious manner.

13. " Aristotle's Ethics, an English translation of them with notes.

14. " Geographical Dictionary from the French.

15. " Hierocles upon Pythagoras, translated into English, perhaps with notes. This is done by Norris.

16. " A book of Letters upon all kinds of subjects.

17. " Claudian, a new edition of his works, cum notis variorum, in the manner of Burman.

18. " Tully's Tusculan Questions, a translation of them.

19. " Tully de Natura Deorum.

20. " Benzo's New History of the New World, to be translated.

21. " Machiavel's History of Florence, to be translated.

22. " History of the Revival of Learning in Europe, containing an account of whatever contributed to the restoration of literature; such as controversies, printing, the destruction of the Greek empire, the encouragement of great men, with the lives of the most eminent patrons and

most eminent early professors of all kinds of learning in different countries.

23. "A body of Chronology, in verse, with historical notes.*

24. "A table of the Spectators, Tatlers, and Guardians, distinguished by figures into six degrees of value, with notes giving the reasons of preference or degradation.†

25. "A Collection of Letters from English authors, with a preface giving some account of the writers, with reasons for selection and criticism upon styles, remarks on each letter, if needful.

26. "A Collection of Proverbs from various languages. Jan. 6,—53.

27. "A Dictionary to the Common Prayer, in imitation of Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible. March,—52.

28. "A Collection of Stories and Examples like those of Valerius Maximus. Jan. 10,—53.

* Johnson actually commenced a body of *Geography* in verse, to which he gave the title of *Geographia Metrica*. The opening lines of this curious undertaking, which few perhaps will regret was left unfinished, close the *poemata* in Murphy's edition.

† I do not think that this design could be carried into execution with much degree of accuracy, and would therefore be liable to constant objections from the variations of taste and feeling.

29. "From Ælian, a volume of select stories, perhaps from others." Jan. 28,—53.

30. "Collections of Travels, Voyages, Adventures, and Descriptions of Countries.

31. "Dictionary of Ancient History and Mythology.

32. "Treatise on the Study of Polite Literature, containing the history of learning, directions for editions, commentaries, &c.

33. "Maxims, Characters, and Sentiments, after the manner of Bruyére, collected out of ancient authors, particularly the Greek; with Apophthegms.

34. "Classical Miscellanies, Select Translations from ancient Greek and Latin authors.

35. "Lives of illustrious persons, as well of the active as the learned, in imitation of Plutarch.

36. "Judgment of the learned upon English authors.

37. "Poetical Dictionary of the English tongue.

38. "Considerations upon the present state of London.

39. "Collection of Epigrams, with notes and observations.

40. "Observations on the English language, relating to words, phrases, and modes of speech.

41. "Minutiæ Literariæ, Miscellaneous reflections, criticisms, emendations, notes.*

42. "History of the Constitution.

43. "Comparison of Philosophical and Christian Morality, by sentences collected from the moralists and fathers.

44. "Plutarch's Lives in English, with notes.

POETRY AND WORKS OF IMAGINATION.

45. "Hymn to Ignorance.

46. "The Palace of Sloth—a vision.

47. "Coluthus, to be translated.

48. "Prejudice—a poetical essay.

49. "The Palace of Nonsense—a vision."

Though a great portion of this catalogue was drawn up half a century ago, several of its articles must still be considered as *desiderata* in English literature. Of these I shall mention a few as more particularly meriting consideration.

N° 2. A *History of Criticism*, upon the comprehensive outline of Johnson, would, if conducted with adequate erudition and acumen, be a most valuable accession to the republic of letters. Nothing of the kind has, I believe, been attempted in this country; and he, indeed, who should commence the arduous undertaking, would

*This would form a work very similar to the Noctes Atticæ of Aulus Gellius.

find it necessary to devote his life to the due completion of the plan.

N° 4. Of the three entire translations which we possess of Tasso, by Fairfax, Doyne, and Hoole, I confess the first appears to me, though occasionally inaccurate, to have done most justice to the original. The versification is peculiarly harmonious; the imagery most distinct and lively, and the pastoral scenery is given with uncommon felicity. It is somewhat singular, that, in an age so laudably attentive to old English literature, this valuable classic should have been overlooked; and that no edition with notes and a glossary, appendages so essential to a work of the sixteenth century, should have issued from our press. I could wish indeed, that Fairfax * might be rendered not only more popular by elucidations of this description, but that he should be decorated likewise with good engravings from the designs of Fuseli, an artist admirably adapted to body forth the conceptions of a Tasso.†

* First printed in 1600.

† The translation of Tasso by Philip Doyne, Esq. which is now little known, and very rarely to be met with, is in blank verse, and was published at Dublin in 1761, in two volumes 8vo. Prefixed are a life of the Italian poet by Mr. Layng, and an essay on the poem by the translator. It is printed with great inaccuracy, especially the first four

N° 5. Of this proposed edition of *Chaucer*, a part has been well executed in the elaborate edition of the Canterbury Tales, by Mr. Tyrwhitt, and in the copious life of the poet by Mr.

books, which abound with errors both verbal and metrical. The version is very unequal; numerous passages are remarkable for little else than slovenly diction and careless versification, and several, on the contrary, are faithfully rendered, and successfully emulate the beauties of the original. As the book is extremely scarce, two or three specimens will, I trust, be deemed acceptable.

Not distant from the christian camp arose,
Amidst the wide and solitary vales,
A forest vast, crowded with ancient trees,
Whose horrid arms did cast a deadly shade:
There, when the sun in mid-day glory shines,
Uncertain, faded, dismal is the light:
Such as appears within the clouded heav'n,
When ev'ning dun with gath'ring darkness strives;
But when the sun retires, in ocean's waves
Quenching his fiery orb, then clouds, and night,
Horror, and ten-fold shade, obscure the place,
Resembling hell, and cover mortal eyes
With blindness deep, and with sad terror shake
The guilty soul: thither no shepherd brings
His tender sheep; no herdsman drives his beeves
To pasture in the gloom; no traveller there
Or pilgrim enters, but at distance turns
His steps away; so awful seems the wood.—
thither went
Ismeno, horrid Mage!
Thrice to the east he turn'd his baleful eyes,

Godwin; but there still remains the greater portion of his works untouched by any skilful editor; for neither Speight nor Urry can be deemed at all competent to the task which they undertook.

And westward thrice where sets the sacred sun;
Thrice wav'd that pow'rful wand that calls the ghosts
Back to their bodies, rising from their tombs
In dreadful apparition; thrice the ground
He struck with unshod feet, and utter'd thus
His curses dire, with accents terrible.
Hear, hear, ye sprites that from the golden stars
Down to the gulph of hell precipitate
Were, by the stroke of roaring thunder, driv'n:
And ye, who rove inhabitants of air,
And tempests raise, and storms: hear, all ye fiends
In Tartarus, who torture damned ghosts,
The ministers of everlasting pains:
Ye dwellers of Avernus, you I call:
And thou, great monarch of th' infernal realms,
Receive in charge this forest.

Canto 13th, line 10.

There welleth from the rock a silver spring
Sparkling and clear, whose waters pure entice
The thirsty guest to drink; yet such the pow'r
Lies in the liquor cold, such poison strange,
The smallest taste of that transparent wave
Inebriates every sense, and all the soul
Transports with sudden joy: the man begins
Unusual merriment, nor ceases once
From that vast laughter, 'till he breathes his last.
Far from these deadly streams with loathing turn
Your thirsty lips, nor let the faithless maids
You next shall meet, upon the verdant bank

By the indefatigable industry of our literary antiquaries, much light has lately been thrown upon the state of our language anterior to the age of Chaucer; its mutations have been traced, its history ascertained, its poetry commented upon, and of course the diction and versification of Chaucer, their merits and defects, better understood and defined. The application of these resources to a new edition of the entire works of the venerable bard, would, there is little doubt, be well received by the public.

N° 7. *A Collection of Letters translated from the modern writers* would be, if it was meant to include the epistles of those who flourished during the revival of literature, a most interesting production. A happy selection from the correspondence of Petrarch, Boccacio, Politian,

> Entice you, with their syren songs; tho' sweet
> And wanton is their voice, tho' fair their form,
> Smiling in joy, and glowing with delight.
>
> Canto 14th, line 576.

> A ruin now, imperial Carthage lies,
> That scarce the remnants of her palaces
> Surpass the weeds in height; so cities fall,
> So perish kingdoms, and their pride and pomp
> Are buried in the sands, and grass conceals
> Their ruins. Wherefore then should man repine
> That he is mortal, or be proud of life
> Whose breath is fleeting air?
>
> Canto 15th, line 156.

Erasmus, Bembus, Sadoletus, Flaminius, &c. could not fail to convey a vast fund of literary anecdote and instruction.

N° 22. *A History of the Revival of Learning in Europe*, upon the plan described in this catalogue, no individual, however extensive his erudition might be, could hope to execute. So gigantic is the scale indeed on which it is drawn, that an association of the most learned in this or any other country would alone be competent to the undertaking. The scheme in some degree corresponded with the powers of Johnson, and was familiar to the mighty mind of Bacon. "Argumentum non aliud est," says he, "quam ut ex omni memoria repetatur quæ doctrinæ et artes quibus mundi ætatibus et regionibus floruerint. Earum antiquitates, progressus, etiam peragrationes per diversus orbis partes (migrant enim scientiæ non secus ac populi) rursus declinationes, obliviones instaurationes commemorentur. Observatur simul per singulas artes, inventionis causa et origo; tradendi mos et disciplina; colendi et exercendi ratio et instituta. Adjiciantur etiam sectæ et controversiæ maxime celebres, quæ homines doctos tenuerunt calumniæ quibus patuerunt, laudes et honores quibus decorati sunt. Notentur auctores præcipui, libri prestantiores, scholæ, successiones, academiæ, societates,

collegia, ordines, denique omnia quæ ad statum literarum spectant.*

It is within the scope, however, of a scholar of judgment, copious reading, and talents, to select the most splendid and interesting portions of the subject, to trace in a general way the causes of its progress or obstruction, and to enliven the whole with biographic detail. On this plan during the last century Collins and Warton published proposals for a History of the Revival of Learning; but it was left for Mr. Roscoe to carry into execution a part of the design in his Lives of Lorenzo de Medici and Leo the tenth. These productions, however, valuable as they are, have not filled up the outline even of the second scheme of composition; an express work on the enquiry, unmixed with extensive political discussion, the detail of military crime or private depravity, remains still to be achieved; nor have we reason to despair that the comprehensive plan of Bacon and Johnson shall not be realized, if we reflect that, among the Italians, the celebrated Tiraboschi has, as far as Italian literature is concerned, approached nearly to the model.

That Johnson failed to execute any of the numerous projects which his catalogue had sketched, will be readily forgiven when we reflect, that he

* De Augment. Scient. Lib. 2, cap. 4.

relinquished them to become the first BIOGRAPHER of his country. In the year 1744 his publication of the *Life of Richard Savage* gave him an undisputed claim to this appellation. In considering, however, the efforts of our author in this instructive branch of literature, I shall dismiss any attention to his biography of the poets until a subsequent period of the narrative, where they will, with more propriety, attract our notice under the head of *Criticism*, and shall, in this place, confine myself to those lives which were the product of his pen between the commencement of the year 1738 and the close of 1763.

It has been justly observed by Aristotle, that individual narrative, from its embracing but a single object, is better understood and consequently more satisfactory and pleasing than the complicated details of general history, in which numerous characters are at the same time acting their various parts upon the stage of existence. It is likewise, as enumerating the events of domestic life, and unfolding the result of circumstances to which we are all liable to be subjected, infinitely more instructive than the relation, however splendid and elegant, of the conduct of kings or the conquest of empires.

"I have often thought," remarks our great moralist, "that there has rarely passed a life

of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful;"* and indeed all that is wanting to render any life useful is, on the acquisition of facts, to draw such inferences as may render them applicable to valuable purposes; and of facts capable of such application, no life, where sanity exists, has been destitute. "Biography," observes Dr. Kippis, "may be considered in two lights. It is very agreeable and useful, when it hath no other view than merely to relate the circumstances of the lives of eminent men, and to give an account of their writings. But it is capable of a still nobler application. It may be regarded as presenting us with a variety of events, that, like experiments in Natural Philosophy, may become the materials from which general truths and principles are to be drawn. When Biographical knowledge is employed in enlarging our acquaintance with human nature, in exciting an honourable emulation, in correcting our prejudices, in refining our sentiments, and in regulating our conduct, it then attains its true excellence. Besides its being a pleasing amusement, and a just tribute of respect to illustrious characters, it rises to the dignity of SCIENCE; and of such science as must ever be esteemed of peculiar importance, because it hath MAN for its object."†

* Rambler, No. 60.

† Preface to Biographia Britannica, vol. 1, 2d edition.

Before Johnson produced the admirable biography of his unfortunate friend, there had been very few elegant compositions in this branch, of the growth of England. Compilations indeed, heavy, dry, and incomplete, had issued in considerable numbers from our press; *Leland*, *Bale*, *Pits*, *Dempster*, *Ware*, *Fuller*, *Bates*, *Wood*, and *Ward*, had all published, either in Latin or English, their ponderous folios, and as mere repositories of facts they are valuable; but with the exception of Sprat's Life of Cowley, and Middleton's Life of Cicero, which last work appeared in 1741, and is written in a classical style, we had no specimen of biography which could safely be referred to as a model.

Previous, indeed, to the publication of the Life of Savage, our author had contributed several very judicious and spirited biographical sketches to the Gentleman's Magazine. In the year 1738 appeared in that Miscellany his Life of Father Paul Sarpi; in 1739 his Life of Boerhaave; in 1740 the Lives of Sir Francis Drake, of Admiral Blake, and of Philip Barretier; and in 1742 the lives of Peter Burman and of Sydenham, of which the last was afterwards prefixed to a translation of his Works by John Swan, M. D. of Newcastle, in Staffordshire.

Of these Lives, those of Boerhaave, Drake, and

Sydenham appear to me to be the best written. To the study of medicine and chemistry, Johnson was peculiarly partial; in the year 1743 he dedicated the Dictionary of his friend Dr. James to the celebrated Mead, and contributed likewise some of the articles in that elaborate work. His predilection for these sciences, indeed, is very visible in his Life of the Leyden Professor, to whose piety and virtue also he has paid the most eloquent tribute, concluding his narrative with a paragraph which cannot be too often repeated. "So far," says he, "was this man from being made impious by philosophy, or vain by knowledge, or by virtue, that he ascribed all his abilities to the bounty, and all his goodness to the grace of God; may his example extend its influence to his admirers and followers! May those who study his writings imitate his life! and those who endeavour after his knowledge aspire likewise to his piety!"

The merit of these biographical attempts was, however, completely eclipsed by the appearance of the Life of Savage. With this unfortunate but imprudent man Johnson became acquainted early in the year 1738, having met him occasionally at St. John's Gate, to which place both were impelled to resort from motives of necessity.

Disowned and persecuted by his mother, and

at the same time combining with this singular misfortune, fascinating manners, and considerable vigour and versatility of intellect, Savage was entitled to, and indeed at first met with, a liberal patronage from the public. But the irregularity of his habits, his dissipation, insolence, and ingratitude, soon alienated the friends which either his abilities or his misfortunes had obtained. "It was his peculiar happiness," remarks his Biographer, "that he scarcely ever found a stranger, whom he did not leave a friend; but it must likewise be added, that he had not often a friend long, without obliging him to become a stranger;" a confession than which nothing can paint in stronger colours the folly and ruinous tendency of his conduct.

The story of Savage was early known to the world through the medium of the Plain Dealer; in N° 28 of which Mr. Hill had written a letter in order to arrest the attention of the public, and, if possible, to excite the compassion of his mother. It contains the following pathetic lines, said to have been composed by Mr. Savage, but which were, in reality, the production of the Plain Dealer:

Hopeless, abandon'd, aimless, and oppress'd;
Lost to delight, and every way distress'd;

'Cross his cold bed, in wild disorder, thrown,
Thus sigh'd Alexis, friendless and alone:
Why do I breathe? What joy can being give,
When she, who gave me life, forgets I live!
Feels not these wintry blasts;—nor heeds my smart,
But shuts me from the shelter of her heart!
Saw me expos'd, to want! to shame! to scorn!
To ills!—which make it mis'ry to be born!
Cast me, regardless, on the world's bleak wild,
And bad me be a wretch while yet a child!
Where can he hope for pity, peace, or rest,
Who moves no softness in a mother's breast?
Custom, law, reason, all! my cause forsake,
And nature sleeps, to keep my woes awake!
Crimes, which the cruel scarce believe can be,
The kind are guilty of, to ruin me!
Even she who bore me blasts me with her hate,
And, meant my fortune, makes herself my fate!
Yet has this sweet neglecter of my woes
The softest, tend'rest breast that pity knows!
Her eyes shed mercy wheresoe'er they shine;
And her soul melts at every woe,—but mine.
Sure then! some secret fate, for guilt unwill'd,
Some sentence, pre-ordain'd to be fulfill'd!
Plung'd me, thus deep, in sorrow's searching flood,
And wash'd me from the mem'ry of her blood.
But, oh! whatever cause has mov'd her hate,
Let me but sigh in silence at my fate.
The God within, perhaps, may touch her breast;
And when she pities, who can be distress'd?

This letter, which was published in 1724, was succeeded in 1727 by a more circumstantial account of the life and sorrows of the unhappy man;

and such was the influence of these appeals, that had he conducted himself with common prudence there is every reason to suppose, from the subsequent exertions in his favour, that, if not affluence, at least competence, might have been his portion.

It is somewhat singular, that with a man so vitiated in his habits as was Savage, Johnson should have delighted to associate; there were, however, some points of contact; they were both authors, both in a state of extreme poverty, and both indignant at the reception which their talents had hitherto received; Savage also had acquirements which Johnson was solicitous to participate; his deportment and engaging manners he much admired; and his intimate knowledge of all the varieties of life enabled Johnson to obtain with safety that information which, on the part of his friend, had been so dearly purchased by experience.

As it was impossible, however, to be the companion of Savage without, in some degree, partaking of his follies and licentious indulgences, it was fortunate for our author's peace of mind that the connection proved of short duration. It terminated in July, 1739, when Savage left London to reside at Swansea, in Wales, upon a small pension contributed by his friends. They parted to meet no more; for on August 1st, 1743, Savage

died in the Newgate of Bristol, where he had been imprisoned for a debt of but eight pounds.

The most irregular, and probably the most unhappy period of Johnson's life, and that on which he reflected with the least complacency, was passed during his intimacy with Savage. Such was the indigence of these extraordinary characters, that they have been known to pass whole nights wandering together through the streets and squares of London, because they actually could not raise, between them, a sum sufficient for the procurement of the meanest lodging.* "Johnson," relates Mr. Boswell, "told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that one night in particular, when Savage and he walked round St. James's Square for want of a lodging, they were not at all depressed by their situation; but in high spirits, and brimful of patriotism, traversed the square for several hours, inveighed against the minister, and resolved they would *stand by their country*.†"

To this connection, dangerous as it was to the

* Sir John Hawkins is inclined to attribute a short temporary separation which took place at this time between Johnson and his wife, to these nocturnal excursions; but it is more probable, that Mrs. Johnson, who retired to a friend's house near the Tower, left her husband because he was incapable of supporting her.

† Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 137.

moral principles of our author, we are indebted for one of the most instructive pieces of biography extant. It was written warm from the heart, with a most intimate knowledge of the character which the author was delineating, and with a flow of composition that is truly astonishing, forty-eight of the printed octavo pages having been executed at a sitting, and the whole completed in thirty-six hours.* No sooner had it issued from the press, than it became the theme of general admiration, and a warm eulogium was immediately passed upon it in the periodical paper entituled "The Champion." The strongest and most valuable proof of its attraction, however, was given by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who declared, "that upon his return from Italy, he met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed."† The unparalleled misfortunes, indeed, and the truly eccentric character of Savage, wanted nothing but the style of Johnson to surround them with the most powerful interest.

* Vide Boswell's Life, p. 139, and Sir John Hawkins's Life, p. 152. † Boswell's Life, p. 139.

of Johnson have, for a time, given Savage a place in the collections of our national poetry; but the lapse of a few years will strip him of a rank which he has obtained from aid altogether extrinsic, and he will descend to mingle with the croud who, from adventitious circumstances, have attained a temporary elevation, and have then fallen to rise no more. Savage will be known to posterity only by the Life of Johnson.

The reputation which our author justly obtained by the biography of this eccentric character,* induced him at subsequent periods of his life, and previous to his great work on the poets, to present the public with several other valuable productions in this class of literature. In 1751, appeared his *Life of Cheynel*, printed in "The Student," a periodical paper published at Oxford.

* It does not appear that Johnson reaped much immediate profit from his Life of Savage; for Mr. Walter Harte, author of the Life of Gustavus Adolphus, has recorded, that "soon after Savage's Life was published, he dined with Edward Cave, and occasionally praised it. Soon after, meeting him, Cave said, 'You made a man very happy t'other day.'—'How could that be?' replied Harte; 'nobody was there but ourselves.' Cave answered, by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily, that he did not choose to appear; but on hearing the conversation, was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book." Boswell, vol. 1, p. 136.

In 1754, he contributed to the Gentleman's Magazine *The Life of Cave*, the founder of that useful miscellany, and his earliest patron; and though the even tenor of the days of this industrious printer presented little that was likely to arrest or gratify curiosity, he has contrived to render it a pleasing and instructive narrative.

A more elaborate effort in biography issued from his pen in 1756, "The Life of Sir Thomas Browne," prefixed to a new edition of his "Christian Morals." To the works of this learned physician, Johnson was peculiarly partial; and it is well known, that for many of the ponderous words which are scattered through the pages of the Rambler, he was indebted to the study of the *Religio Medici* and the *Pseudo-doxia Epidemica*. It was to be expected therefore, that the subject would be treated by him with more than common attention; it is, indeed, written *con amore*, and ranks among the best of his biographical attempts.

The same year he likewise produced in the Literary Magazine, or Universal Review, *The Life of Frederick III. King of Prussia*, "a model," says Mr. Murphy, "of the biographical style." The narrative, which, in point of language and arrangement, is remarkably clear and perspicuous, terminates with the close of the

year 1745, and exhibits our author's political and diplomatic talents in a very favourable point of view. There is a reflection, however, in this life which ought not to have fallen from the pen of Johnson, and which, as it is perfectly unqualified, is an unjustifiable satire on literature and its professors. Expatiating on the auspicious manner in which the young king commenced his reign, he relates, that "he still continued that correspondence with learned men which he began when he was a prince; and the eyes of all *scholars, a race of mortals formed for dependence,* were upon him." An independent spirit was one of Johnson's own characteristics; and he might have recollected, that not only many of the first persons in the republic of letters have been remarkable for energy of mind and freedom of spirit; but that literature and science, when properly pursued, have in themselves a strong tendency to emancipate their cultivators from the slavery of adulation, and the baseness of sycophantic submission.

After a long pause in his biographical labours, our author wrote, in 1763, *The Life of Roger Ascham,* for the purpose of being prefixed to a quarto edition of that writer's English Works, undertaken by the Reverend Mr. Bennet. The philological learning of Ascham, and particularly

his skill in English composition during the reign of Henry VIII. justly entitled him to the gratitude and attention of his country; it was one of his principal objects "to give an example of diction more natural and more truly English, than was used by the common writers of that age, whom he censures for mingling exotic terms with their native language;" and, in this he has, for the most part, happily succeeded. The life of this valuable scholar is written with Johnson's usual vigour and richness of style, and, though short, contains much just sentiment, and many interesting remarks. The following paragraph, for instance, on Ascham's admission into the university in 1530, delineates in a brief, but very striking manner, the peculiar state of learning at that important æra. "Ascham entered Cambridge," he remarks, "at a time when the last great revolution of the intellectual world was filling every academical mind with ardour or anxiety. The destruction of the Constantinopolitan empire had driven the Greeks, with their language, into the interior parts of Europe, the art of printing had made the books easily attainable, and Greek now began to be taught in England. The doctrines of Luther had already filled all the nations of the Romish communion with controversy and dissention. New studies of literature, and new tenets

of religion, found employment for all who were desirous of truth, or ambitious of fame. Learning was at that time prosecuted with that eagerness and perseverance which, in this age of indifference and dissipation, it is not easy to conceive. To teach or to learn, was at once the business and the pleasure of the academical life; and an emulation of study was raised by Cheke and Smith, to which even the present age perhaps owes many advantages, without remembering or knowing its benefactors."

From an attentive perusal of the Lives which we have now noticed, and more particularly the Life of Savage, Johnson's talent for biography may be readily ascertained. He had embraced with avidity every opportunity of which his circumstances admitted, to acquire a correct knowledge of mankind; he had, at the period when he commemorated the misfortunes of his friend, studied with uncommon attention and success the shades and variations of character which distinguish the lower and many of the middle classes of society; and his mind was singularly fertile in drawing lessons of moral wisdom from events, opinions, and modes of action. His prejudices, however, were strong and early formed, and, though he never intentionally deserts the standard

of virtue and of truth, they have sometimes warped his sentiments and feelings, sometimes induced him to overlook what should have been reprobated, and to extol what was not worthy of encomium. Yet these blemishes are not numerous in the specimens that we have been considering, and are amply atoned for by the general solidity of judgment which they display, by originality of thought, and felicity of expression.

Though the poetry and biography of Johnson had placed him high in the public esteem, they had contributed but little to exempt him even from the most pressing necessities; and in the year 1745, he had to look around for some mode of literary exertion more permanent and productive. His favourite subject had long been a "Life of Alfred," but this he now relinquished for a new edition of Shakespeare, of which he published anonymous proposals; these, however, dropped powerless from the press, owing to the well known fact that Warburton, whose reputation was then at its height, had been for some time engaged on a similar design. It was his fortune, nevertheless, to commute this scheme for one much more important and profitable, and he contracted with the booksellers for the production of an English Dictionary; an engagement

which enabled him to live more at his ease, and to occupy a house in Gough-square, Fleet-street.

From this great work, the labour of years, and which will subsequently attract our attention, I shall turn, to state that our author, with a view to relieve his mind, now "tugging at the oar," by the charms of conversation, and the pleasures of elegant literature, instituted a club, and commenced a periodical paper.

The club, which was a weekly meeting in Ivy-lane, Paternoster-row, commenced with nine persons beside himself, all men of much respectability, and several of whom afterwards attained considerable celebrity in the literary world. With these select friends, who consisted of Dr. Richard Bathurst, Dr. Hawkesworth, the Rev. Dr. Salter, Mr. Ryland, a merchant, Mr. John Payne, a bookseller, Mr. Samuel Dyer, educated for a dissenting minister, Dr. William M'Ghie, a Scotch physician, Dr. Edmund Barker, a physician, and Mr. afterwards Sir John Hawkins, he spent his evening hours in the luxury of innocent gaiety and literary discussion. For the enjoyment of society of this description, unfettered by the restraints of domestic regulation, Johnson had a peculiar relish; a tavern-chair, he would assert, was the throne of human felicity. "As soon,"

said he, "as I enter the door of a tavern, I experience an oblivion of care, and a freedom from solicitude: when I am seated, I find the master courteous, and the servants obsequious to my call; anxious to know and ready to supply my wants; wine there exhilarates my spirits, and prompts me to free conversation and an interchange of discourse with those whom I most love; I dogmatize, and am contradicted, and in this conflict of opinions and sentiments I find delight." The very late hours to which Johnson had accustomed himself, and which were incompatible with the routine of a regular family, was one great motive for the assemblage of his friends beneath a tavern roof; he could there act with the independence which he loved; and to this mode of collecting his friends, though he shortly afterwards entirely relinquished the use of wine, he was partial to the close of his days.

The second relaxation to which Johnson had recourse from the fatigue of philological compilation, has given him a most exalted rank in the character of an ESSAYIST. In the year 1750, he commenced a periodical paper under the title of *The Rambler*; a work which, from its peculiar style and manner, and its powerful influence on language and composition, has fixed a new era in the annals of English literature.

Thirty-six years had now elapsed since the close of the eighth volume of the Spectator; a period indeed, during which, as we have already seen in the first essays of this volume, numerous attempts had been made to rival or to copy the productions of Steele and Addison. Not one, however, fully succeeded in the arduous undertaking; and of eighty-two efforts which we have enumerated, probably not more than half a dozen are, in the present day, known to have existed by any other persons than those whose curiosity may have induced them to trace the literary history of their country.

Johnson, therefore, had not to contend with any recent productions of such acknowledged excellence as might render his attempt either presumptuous or hazardous; and in the long interval which had taken place since the retreat of the Spectator, so many changes had occurred in society, literature, and manners, that to a writer of ability and observation it became no very difficult task to impress upon periodical composition the stamp of novelty and originality.

Of these changes it may be necessary, before we enter upon the history of the publication of the Rambler, to enumerate the most material, as they will serve to throw a strong light on the scope and tendency of our author's papers.

During the reign of George II. the commercial consequence of Great Britain had rapidly increased, and had given rise to various alterations in our modes of living, and to characters which had not hitherto subsisted. Luxury and refinement, the invariable attendants on extended commerce, had pervaded a much larger portion of society than in the days of Addison, and the mutations in the fashionable world had kept pace with the facilities of extravagance and caprice.

The dissipation and manners of the metropolis, which, during the publication of the Tatler and Spectator, had few opportunities of spreading far beyond the capital that gave them birth, possessed, towards the middle of the eighteenth century, a free and rapid access to every quarter of the kingdom; and, as Sir John Hawkins has observed, "the maid of honour and the farmer's wife put on a cap of the latest form, almost at the same instant." To the great improvements in travelling, occasioned by the universal establishment of turnpike roads, good inns, and light carriages, are we to attribute this remarkable alteration, which imparted, if not an improved, yet certainly a very novel appearance to provincial life, excited a very curious emulation, added fresh effervescence to affectation, and gave play to a new series of eccentricities and follies.

The state also both of the capital and the country had received great modification from the wide dissemination of literature; the foundation for this salutary change had been laid by Steele and Addison, and, at the period when the Rambler started into existence, its effects on society were very evident and striking. To be acquainted with letters was now no longer a disgrace to the fine gentleman; classical studies, indeed, were deemed necessary to all whose circumstances placed them above manual labour; and the ladies, to whom spelling and writing had been formerly acquisitions of great magnitude, were, in the days of Johnson, very universally partakers of the most elegant refinements of education.

To this general distribution of literary intelligence, which, at the period under consideration, not only operated strongly upon the upper and middle, but likewise on the lower ranks of society, great assistance had been given by the establishment of the Gentleman's Magazine, in 1731; a miscellany which soon acquired an unprecedented circulation, and, by affording a most respectable arena for diffident scholars and young authors, created in the English republic of letters a very ardent spirit of emulation. To the Journal of Cave was added, in the year 1749, the "Monthly

Review," the herald of a vast and increasing series of periodical criticism. These productions, still among the most respectable of their kind, have a just claim, through their influence in accelerating the dispersion of knowledge, to the formation of distinct epochs in the annals of our literature. In the year 1750, the former had for nineteen years been contributing powerfully toward the progress of literary information; and the latter had very successfully begun a career which has gradually converted the nation into a body of critics.

Another natural consequence of a diffused taste for letters was a vast increase in the number of authors; many of whom, as will ever be the case, were notoriously inadequate to the duties of their profession. Collectively, however, their influence upon society became every day more powerful and decided; they were the directors of public opinion, and consequently their precepts and conduct became an object of serious attention. The state of literature and its disciples has, therefore, furnished Johnson with a new and fertile topic of discussion; he delighted to expatiate on the fate and fortunes, the pleasures and miseries, the vices and follies, of the sons of learning; and he has alternately launched with success the shafts of ridicule and the weapons of reproof.

The modes of town life, its dissipation, and the characters that figured in the Beau Monde, were likewise, in 1750, very dissimilar to those which existed at the period of the Spectator, and they have consequently furnished our author with some novel and poignant themes for satire. The fashionable hours, even in domestic life, began to intrude upon the night; the amusements of the capital were commencing that career of continuity to which we are now familiarized; the play, the opera, and the masquerade, soliciting their votaries on the same night in regular succession. The Beau and Belle, such as they are described in the pages of Steele, no longer were in being; Will Honeycombe would have been an object of contempt, for the fop now assumed a much greater portion of frivolity, levity, and extravagance. The professions were dropping their exterior characteristics; the divine was too often mistaken for the layman; the physician had dismissed his cane and wig, and the lawyer his suit of black. The merchant, the tradesman, and the mechanic, had each stepped beyond their former spheres; the first had assumed the airs of a man of gallantry and fashion, and was as often seen in the ball-room as the counting-house; the shop-keeper had arrogated to himself the name and consequence of the merchant; and the mechanic, having

laid aside his apron, had no longer the mortification of carrying a badge, which from its form, or colour, or material, might be indicative of his employment.

To these mutations and follies was added a subject of very serious animadversion, the increasing scepticism of the age; a topic which has drawn from the pen of Johnson several admirable papers in support of religion and its evidences.

It is probable, that for many months previous to the publication of the first number of the Rambler, its author had been weighing in his mind the propriety and utility of such a vehicle for public instruction, and had been collecting materials for his purpose, as they were presented to him in his intercourse with society; at least, this was certainly the case with the early part of the work, as on the first blank leaf of a Common Place Book, which was afterwards in the possession of Mr. Boswell, he had written "To the hundred and twenty-eighth page, collections for the Rambler," and subsequently, "In all, taken of provided materials, thirty." With these hints, or *notanda*, and with a mind rich in observation on life and manners, he commenced "The Rambler;" a title, however, by no means happily chosen, as it corresponds not with the tenor of the work, of

which the great characteristic is uniform dignity. He appears, indeed, to have had no well founded motive for the adoption of the name, nor do we possess a more satisfactory reason for his preference than what he chose to assign to Sir Joshua Reynolds; " What must be done, Sir," said he, " will be done. When I was to begin publishing that paper, I was at a loss how to name it. I sat down at night upon my bedside, and resolved that I would not go to sleep till I had fixed its title. The Rambler seemed the best that occurred, and I took it."*

However apparently precipitate he might be in the selection of a title, it is evident, from the following solemn address, which he called his " Prayer on the Rambler," that he entered upon his labours, not only with a due sense of their importance to his literary fame, but with the pious hope of rendering them subservient to the highest interests of virtue and religion.

" Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly : grant, I beseech thee, that in this my undertaking, thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 170. The Italians have translated this title by *Il Vagabondo.*

that I may promote thy glory, and the salvation both of myself and others; grant this, O Lord! for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Having strengthened his mind by this act of devotion, he commenced the publication of his essays on the 20th of March, 1750, and continued regularly to produce a number every Tuesday and Saturday for two years, the two hundred and eighth and last paper being dated March 14th, 1752.* To each number was affixed the price of two-pence, and it was well and accurately printed on a sheet and a half of fine paper.

Of the energy and fertility of resource with which this work was conducted, there cannot be a more striking proof, than that during the whole

* It is somewhat remarkable, that out of four biographies of our author, only one should be right in the simple statement of the days and dates of the publication of the Rambler. Boswell has affirmed, that it appeared every Tuesday and *Friday* till Saturday the 17*th* of March. Mr. Murphy is correct; Dr. Anderson has followed implicitly Mr. Boswell; and Mr. Chalmers, who is right with regard to the days, has given the close on the 17th of March. Nothing but gross inattention could lead to the substitution of Friday for Saturday; but the date of the 17th appears to have been copied either from the folio in the Edinburgh edition, in eight volumes, in which No. 207 is dated Tuesday, March 10th, 1752, and No. 208 Saturday, March 17th, 1752; a manifest mistake, as the latter day must necessarily have been the 14th. The late editions are correct.

course of publication, its author, who was afflicted with disease, and harassed with the toils of lexicography, with the exception of four or five contributions, neither required nor obtained assistance. One consequence, however, of this solitary labour, was an uniformity of texture not well calculated to procure immediate popularity. The public had been accustomed, in the pages of the Spectator, to great variety of style, to a fascinating gaiety of manner, and to a perpetual interchange of topic, and it was not therefore hastily taught to relish the solemn and majestic tone of the preceptive Rambler. It gradually gained ground, however, with the learned, the wise, and the good; and though not more than five hundred of each paper were taken off during its publication in numbers, as soon as it was collected into volumes, its circle of attraction began rapidly to enlarge. Yet that it acquired enthusiastic admirers, if not numerous yet select, even from its earliest appearance, may be drawn from contemporary publications; from the newspapers of the day, from the Gentleman's Magazine, and from The Student, a miscellany of which, in the second essay of this volume, we have exhibited a passage of high praise in favour of the Rambler. Fresh proofs, however, of an early and zealous support of this paper, have very lately appeared

in the Correspondence of Richardson, edited by Mrs. Barbauld, and which, as singularly striking and curious, cannot fail of being acceptable to my readers. In a letter to Mr. Cave, dated August 9th, 1750, the author of Clarissa thus forcibly expresses his opinion:

"Though I have constantly been a purchaser of the Ramblers from the first five that you was so kind as to present me with, yet I have not had time to read any further than those first five, till within these two or three days past. But I can go no further than the thirteenth, now before me, till I have acquainted you that I am inexpressibly pleased with them. I remember not any thing in the Spectators that I read, for I never found time—(alas! my life has been a trifling busy one) to read them all, that half so much struck me; and yet I think of them highly.

"I hope the world tastes them; for its own sake, I hope the world tastes them; the author I can only guess at. There is but one man, I think, that could write them; I desire not to know his name; but I should rejoice to hear that they succeed; for I would not, for any consideration, that they should be laid down through discouragement.

"I have, from the first five, spoke of them with honour. I have the vanity to think that I

have procured them admirers; that is to say, *readers*. And I am vexed that I have not taken larger draughts of them before, that my zeal for their merit might have been as glowing as now I find it.

"Excuse the overflowing of a heart highly delighted with the subject; and believe me to be an equal friend to Mr. Cave and the Rambler, as well as

"Their most humble servant,

"S. RICHARDSON."

To this, Mr. Cave in a letter written August the 13th, 1750, replies, "that Mr. Johnson is the *Great Rambler*; being, as you observe, the only man who can furnish two such papers in a week, besides his other great business, and has not been assisted with above three.

"I may discover to you that the world is not so kind to itself as you wish it. The encouragement, as to sale, is not in proportion to the high character given to the work by the judicious, not to say the raptures expressed by the few that *do* read it; but its being thus relished in numbers, gives hope that the sets must go off; as it is a *fine* paper, and, considering the late hour of having the copy, tolerably printed.

"When the author was to be kept private, (which was the first scheme,) two gentlemen,

belonging to the prince's court, came to me to enquire his name, in order to do him service; and also brought a list of seven gentlemen to be served with the Rambler. As I was not at liberty, an inference was drawn, that I was desirous to keep to myself so excellent a writer. Soon after, Mr. Doddington sent a letter directed *to the Rambler*, inviting him to his house, when he should be disposed to enlarge his acquaintance. In a subsequent number a kind of excuse was made, with a hint that a good writer might not appear to advantage in conversation.

"I have had letters of approbation from Dr. Young, Dr. Hartley, Dr. Sharpe, Miss C——, &c. &c. most of them, like you, setting them in a rank equal, and some superior, to the Spectators, (of which I have not read many for the reasons which you assign;) but, notwithstanding such recommendation, whether the price of *two-pence*, or the unfavourable season of their first publication, hinders the demand, no boast can be made of it."

These letters clearly evince that the uncommon merit of the Rambler was very soon appreciated by men of taste and genius. Dr. Young, it is said, was particularly struck with the serious papers; and in his copy of the Rambler, which was inspected by Mr. Boswell, numerous passages

were marked by single and double folds as indicative of different degrees of excellence.

Johnson was highly gratified by the minute attention of Young, and not less so by the applause of one who was peculiarly dear to him. "Johnson told me," says Mr. Boswell, "with an amiable fondness, that Mrs. Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him, after a few numbers of the Rambler had come out, 'I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this.' Distant praise, from whatever quarter, is not so delightful as that of a wife whom a man loves and esteems. Her approbation may be said to come home to his bosom; and being so near, its effect is most sensible and permanent." *

The passage alluded to by Cave, as an apology for the non-acceptance of Mr. Doddington's invitation, is one of the most eloquent in the Rambler, and was probably written under the conscious sense of that exterior roughness and dictatorial manner which too often rendered his conversation painfully oppressive. "A transition from an author's book," he remarks, "to his conversation, is too often like an entrance into a large city,

* Life, vol. 1, p. 178.

after a distant prospect. Remotely, we see nothing but spires of temples, and turrets of palaces, and imagine it the residence of splendour, grandeur, and magnificence; but when we have passed the gates, we find it perplexed with narrow passages, disgraced with despicable cottages, embarrassed with obstructions, and clouded with smoke.*

The slow progress of the Rambler toward the possession of that fame which it ultimately acquired, affected not our author, however, in a pecuniary light. He had entered into a contract with a bookseller of great worth and liberality, a Mr. John Payne, of Paternoster-Row, who had agreed to give him two guineas for each paper as it appeared, and to admit him to a share of the profits arising from the sale of the collected work. He received regularly, therefore, four guineas a week for two years; an engagement that enabled him to live comfortably, and which, if not productive of much present advantage, was eventually a most lucrative bargain, to the publisher.

During the appearance of the Rambler in single numbers, Mr. James Elphinstone, a friend to Johnson, and who happened then to be in Edinburgh, undertook to publish them in that

* Rambler, No. 14.

metropolis almost immediately after issuing from the London press. They were neatly printed in duodecimo, and sold by W. Gordon, C. Wright, and the other booksellers. Of this Edinburgh Rambler, which is now before me, and which was first circulated in single papers, and afterwards collected into eight small volumes, there were two editions; and on the last page of the sixth number of the first edition is the following advertisement, which was continued on several of the subsequent numbers.

"EDINBURGH,

To be continued on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Printed for the AUTHOR: Sold by W. Gordon, and C. Wright, at their shops in the Parliament-close, price one penny; and regularly delivered to subscribers in town, or sent to the country by post."

The second edition, one volume of which is likewise in my possession, came out in 1752. To both editions are annexed, at the close of each volume, versions of the mottos by Mr. Elphinstone. I have been the more particular with regard to this Scotch edition, as it is remarkably scarce, is a literal transcript from the first folio, and will be subsequently referred to.

Upon the completion of the folio copies, the Rambler was almost immediately re-printed in

London, in six volumes duodecimo, 1752, and again in four volumes octavo. It has since passed through more than twenty editions, ten of which, independent of those which were surreptitiously published in Scotland, Ireland, and America, were circulated in the author's life-time. So great a favourite, indeed, has this work become with the public, that Mr. Boswell, in the year 1791, asserts, upon good grounds, that its sale had then far exceeded that of any other periodical papers since the reign of Queen Anne.* It may be worth while, in this place, to remark, that many of the translations of the mottos in the London editions of the Rambler, were from the pen of Johnson, and are very happily executed. To Mr. James Elphinstone, and to a Mr. F. Lewis, he was indebted for the remainder.†

* After a few editions had passed the press, the Rambler was accommodated with an Index compiled by the Rev. Mr. Flexman, a gentleman of whom, as we may collect from a curious anecdote preserved by Mr. Boswell, Johnson appears to have entertained no very favourable opinion. "Johnson would sometimes," he remarks, "found his dislike upon very slender circumstances. Happening one day to mention Mr. Flexman, a dissenting minister, with some compliment to his exact memory in chronological matters, the doctor replied, 'Let me hear no more of him, sir; that is the fellow who made the index to my Ramblers, and set down the name of Milton thus: Milton, Mr. *John*.'" Boswell's Life, vol. 4, p. 340.

† Vol. 1, p. 194.

The great reputation which Johnson had now acquired as a writer of periodical essays occasioned an application to be made to him, towards the close of the same year in which the Rambler had ceased to favour the world, to assist in the arrangement and conduct of a similar production under the title of *The Adventurer*. With this invitation he complied, and contributed, during the course of the publication, twenty-nine numbers, Nos. 34, 39, 41, 45, 50, 53, 58, 62, 67, 69, 74, 81, 84, 85, 92, 95, 99, 102, 107, 108, 111, 115, 119, 120, 126, 128, 131, 137, and 138. Of these the first is dated March 3d, 1753, and the last March 2d, 1754. They are written with his usual energy of style and manner, and on topics similar to those which engaged his attention in the Rambler; he has distinguished them by the signature T; and the sum that he received for their composition, which was two guineas per paper, he presented to Dr. Bathurst, who is supposed to have acted as his amanuensis on the occasion; at least we have the authority of Mrs. Williams for the assertion "*that he dictated them while Bathurst wrote.*" *

After an interval of four years, Johnson again resumed his pen as an essayist, and on the 15th of April, 1758, commenced another periodical

* Boswell, vol. 1, p. 218.

paper under the title of *The Idler*. This was not, however, printed singly like the Rambler and Adventurer, but appeared every Saturday, in a newspaper published by Mr. John Newbery, and called "The Universal Chronicle; or Weekly Gazette." It was continued regularly for two years, as long indeed as the Chronicle was enabled to exist, and consists of one hundred and three numbers, of which the last is dated April the 5th, 1760. The author's remuneration, it is said, was a share in the profits of the Chronicle; but this, it is probable, could not be great, as want of encouragement was the ostensible cause of that paper being relinquished; and yet from the lines distinguished by Italics in the following curious advertisement, which was written by Dr. Johnson, in order to suppress the piratical practice of introducing his Idlers without acknowledgment into other publications, it would appear, that although he was himself a proprietor, he had likewise, as a distinct object from the general concern, a separate and very liberal payment for his essays.

"London, Jan. 5th, 1759. *Advertisement.*

"The proprietors of the paper, entituled 'The Idler,' having found that those essays are inserted in the newspapers and magazines with so little regard to justice or decency, that the Universal

Chronicle, in which they first appear, is not always mentioned, think it necessary to declare to the publishers of those collections, that however patiently they have hitherto endured these injuries, made yet more injurious by contempt, they have now determined to endure them no longer. They have already seen *essays, for which a very large price is paid*, transferred with the most shameless rapacity into the weekly or monthly compilations, and their right, at least for the present, alienated from them before they could themselves be said to enjoy it. But they would not willingly be thought to want tenderness even for men by whom no tenderness hath been shewn. The past is without remedy, and shall be without resentment. But those who have been thus busy with their sickles in the fields of their neighbours are henceforward to take notice, that the time of impunity is at an end. Whoever shall, without our leave, lay the hand of rapine upon our papers, is to expect that we shall vindicate our due, by the means which justice prescribes, and which are warranted by the immemorial prescriptions of honourable trade. We shall lay hold, in our turn, on their copies, degrade them from the pomp of wide margin, and diffuse typography, contract them into a narrow space, and sell them at an humble price; yet not

with a view of growing rich by confiscations, for we think not much better of money got by punishment, than by crimes: we shall, therefore, when our losses are repaid, give what profit shall remain to the magdalens: for we know not who can be more properly taxed for the support of penitent prostitutes, than prostitutes in whom there yet appears neither penitence nor shame."

In the composition of his Idlers, Johnson received much more assistance than while writing the Rambler; twelve papers were contributed by his friends, but of the authors of five of these we are, at present, ignorant. When the Idler was published in two volumes 12mo, the author; for reasons which cannot now be ascertained, omitted N° 22 of the original folio edition; and he likewise added to the second volume, an Essay on Epitaphs, a Dissertation on the Epitaphs of Pope, and an Essay on the Bravery of the English common Soldiers.

That the Idlers, which are in general little more than half the length of the Ramblers, were sometimes written with great rapidity, and without any preparatory materials, is evident from the following anecdote communicated by Mr. Boswell. "Mr. Langton," he relates, "remembers Johnson, when on a visit at Oxford, asking him

one evening, how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, 'then we shall do very well.' He upon this instantly sat down and finished an Idler, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, 'Sir,' said he, 'you shall not do more than I have done myself.' He then folded it up, and sent it off."* This hurry of composition will in some measure account for the general omission in the Idler, of what has been considered as the usual accompaniment of a periodical paper, the prefixion of a motto.

In point of *plan*, the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler, are much inferior to the Spectator; they are, indeed, merely a series of essays, without any other connection than what their title and juxtaposition may impart; whilst in the papers of Addison, the institution of a permanent club, and the frequent agency of its well-drawn and happily-conceived characters, form a bond of union which cements the mass into a perfect whole. The deficiency, however, is, with very few exceptions, common to all the writers of periodical essays since the appearance of the Spectator and Guardian; and in almost every other respect, the

* Boswell, vol. 1, p. 292.

papers that we are commenting upon, are entitled to the highest consideration and applause.*

It was in the Rambler that Johnson first presented to the public those peculiarities and prominent beauties of style which immediately distinguished him, in so striking a manner, from all preceding writers, and which have made so durable an impression upon our language. It will, therefore, be a subject both of curiosity and utility, not only to offer a few observations on the novel style and diction of this justly celebrated work; but, as a preliminary step, to ascertain also what had been the state and progress of composition, between the close of the Spectator and the publication of the Rambler; a disquisition which will directly continue the series of quotations and remarks that were introduced in our essays on Addison, and which will together form a history

* It is somewhat remarkable, that Johnson has, in the twenty-third number of his Rambler, introduced an assertion which must be considered as in direct opposition to the fact. "*My readers,*" says he, "having, from the *performances of my predecessors,* established an idea of *unconnected essays.*" If by his *predecessors* he means to allude to Addison and Steele, the observation is truly extraordinary; as the connection pervading the whole of seven volumes of the Spectator, through the medium of the club, is one of the most conspicuous and valuable features of that work.

of the progress of English style, from the year 1590, to the middle of the eighteenth century. To this it will be necessary to add some remarks on the effects of the Johnsonian style on the language and composition of the present period.

The author whose prose writings merit, immediately after those of Addison, the tribute of our praise, is the celebrated POPE. He, like his master Dryden, though his chief renown be derived from his poetical powers, has attained such excellence in prose composition as will fully qualify him for one of our best models. If he possess not the mellow richness of Dryden, he can claim greater correctness, and greater elegance; if he exhibit not the variety, the copiousness, and volubility of the elder bard, he is, however, more pure, concise, and emphatic. The structure of his sentences is peculiarly clear and neat, and at the same time accompanied with a due portion of melody and cadence. He seldom, if ever, violates the genius of the language, either in his words or collocation; but he is sometimes too declamatory, sparkling, and antithetic. In ease and simplicity, he is inferior to Addison; in force, spirit, and concinnity, superior.

Of the prose of Pope, the "Postscript to the Odyssey," and the "Preface to Shakspeare," are the best specimens; and from these interesting

pieces of criticism I shall select a couple of quotations.

"Upon the whole, he (Longinus) affirms the Odyssey to have less sublimity and fire than the Iliad, but he does not say it wants the sublime, or wants fire. He affirms it to be narrative, but not that the narration is defective. He affirms it to abound in fictions, not that those fictions are ill invented, or ill executed. He affirms it to be nice and particular in painting the manners, but not that those manners are ill painted. If *Homer* has fully in these points accomplished his own design, and done all that the nature of his poem demanded or allowed, it still remains perfect in its kind, and as much a master-piece as the Iliad.

"The *Battle of Constantine*, and the *School of Athens*, are both pieces of *Raphael*: shall we censure the *School of Athens* as faulty, because it has not the fury and fire of the other? or shall we say that *Raphael* was grown grave and old, because he chose to represent the manners of old men and philosophers? There is all the silence, tranquillity, and composure in the one, and all the warmth, hurry, and tumult in the other, which the subject of either required: both of them had been imperfect, if they had not been as they are. And let the painter or poet be young or old, who designs and performs in this manner, it

proves him to have made the piece at a time of life, when he was master not only of his art, but of his discretion.

"The Odyssey is a perpetual source of poetry: the stream is not the less full for being gentle; though it is true (when we speak only with regard to the *sublime*,) that a river foaming and thundering in cataracts from rocks and precipices, is what more strikes, amazes, and fills the mind, than the same body of water, flowing afterwards through peaceful vales, and agreeable scenes of pasturage."*

"If ever any author deserved the name of an *original*, it was Shakspeare. Homer himself drew not his art so immediately from the fountains of Nature; it proceeded through Egyptian strainers and channels, and came to him not without some tincture of the learning, or some cast of the models, of those before him. The poetry of Shakspeare was inspiration indeed: he is not so much an imitator, as an instrument, of Nature; and it is not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.

"His *Characters* are so much Nature herself, that it is a sort of injury to call them by so distant a name as copies of her. Those of other poets have a constant resemblance, which shews

* Postscript to the Odyssey.

that they received them from one another, and were but multipliers of the same image; each picture, like a mock-rainbow, is but the reflection of a reflection. But every single character in Shakspeare is as much an individual, as those in life itself; it is as impossible to find any two alike; and such as from their relation or affinity in any respect appear most to be twins, will, upon comparison, be found remarkably distinct. To this life and variety of character, we must add the wonderful preservation of it; which is such throughout his plays, that had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker.

"The *Power* over our *Passions* was never possessed in a more eminent degree, or displayed in so different instances. Yet all along, there is seen no labour, no pains to raise them; no preparation to guide or guess to the effect, or be perceived to lead toward it: but the heart swells, and the tears burst out, just at the proper places: we are surprised the moment we weep; and yet, upon reflection, find the passion so just, that we should be surprised if we had not wept, and wept at that very moment.

"How astonishing is it again, that the passions directly opposite to this, laughter and spleen, are

no less at his command; that he is not more a master of the *great* than the *ridiculous* in human nature; of our noblest tendernesses, than of our vainest foibles; of our strongest emotions, than of our idlest sensations!"*

The diction of these extracts in general corresponds with the character which we have given of the style of Pope: there is, however, one passage in the third paragraph on Shakspeare, which detracts from the eulogium, and is a gross violation both of grammar and construction; *no preparation to guide or guess to the effect, or be perceived to lead toward it*: to *guess to an effect* is certainly a vile idiom, and the conclusion of the clause is almost equally aukward and flat.

ATTERBURY, the friend of Pope, and a preacher of great eloquence and popularity, is the next author who, on account of his style, has a claim upon our attention. His sermons are written, for the period in which they were composed, with uncommon purity and correctness of diction. Their style is frequently elegant and beautiful, but it seldom rises to much energy or warmth, and is sometimes rendered insipid and tedious, by slovenly construction and protracted sentences. It possesses, however, both more animation and more sweetness than the style of Tillotson, but not

* Preface to the Works of Shakspeare.

more variety; a passage therefore from the first, and perhaps the best, sermon in his works, the subject of which is the duty of praise and thanksgiving, will afford a sufficiently clear idea of the style and manner of Atterbury.

"'Tis one of the earliest instructions given us by philosophy, and which has ever since been approved and inculcated by the wisest men of all ages, that the original design of making man was, that he might praise and honour him who made him. When God had finished this goodly frame of things we call *the world*, and put together the several parts of it, according to his infinite wisdom, in exact number, weight, and measure, there was still wanting a creature, in these lower regions, that could apprehend the beauty, order, and exquisite contrivance of it; that from contemplating the gift, might be able to raise itself to the great Giver, and do honour to all his attributes. Every thing indeed that God made, did, in some sense, glorify its author, inasmuch as it carried upon it the plain mark and impress of the Deity, and was an effect worthy of that first cause from whence it flowed; and thus might the *heavens* be said, at the first moment in which they stood forth, *to declare his glory, and the firmament to shew his handy work.* But this was an imperfect and defective glory; the sign was of no

signification here below, whilst there was no one here as yet to take notice of it. Man, therefore, was formed to supply this want, endowed with powers fit to find out, and to acknowledge. these unlimited perfections; and then put into this Temple of God, this lower world, as the Priest of Nature, to offer up the incense of Thanks and Praise for the mute and insensible part of the Creation.—

"Other parts of devotion, such as *confession* and *prayer*, seem not originally to have been designed for man, nor man for them. They imply *guilt* and *want*, with which the *state of innocence* was not acquainted. Had man continued in that estate, his worship (like the devotions of angels) had been paid to heaven in pure acts of thanksgiving; and nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying the good things of life, as nature directed, and praising the God of nature who bestowed them. But being fallen from innocence and abundance; having contracted guilt, and forfeited his right to all sorts of mercies; prayer and confession became necessary, for a time, to retrieve the loss, and to restore him to that state wherein he should be able to live without them. These are fitted, therefore, for a lower dispensation; before which, in paradise, there was nothing but praise, and after which, there

shall be nothing but that in heaven. Our perfect state did at first, and will at last, consist in the performance of this duty; and herein, therefore, lies the excellence and the honour of our nature." *

A great portion of the popularity which attended Atterbury as a preacher, was most probably derived from the excellence of his delivery, and from his habit of preaching extempore; a custom that almost necessarily imparts animation and spirit, and which is noticed by Steele in N° 66 of the Tatler, as the peculiar practice of Atterbury; "he has," says he, "so much regard to his congregation, that he commits to his memory what he has to say to them; and has so soft and graceful a behaviour, that it must attract your attention." †

Contemporary with Atterbury was JOSEPH SPENCE; whose "Essay on Pope's Odyssey," published in 1727, is one of the most pleasing and useful pieces of criticism which we possess. It is written in the dialogue form, and contributed to render popular a species of composition very difficult to execute. He had been preceded in this mode of writing by Henry More, Addison, and Shaftesbury, and was immediately succeeded by

* Vol. 1st, Sermon 1st.

† Tatler, vol. 2, p. 133, 134, 8vo edition of 1797.

Berkeley, Harris, and Hurd. The good sense, candour, and learning, which are every where displayed in this work, " a work," as Dr. Warton observes, " of the truest taste, and soundest criticism," demand some notice of the style in which they are enveloped; and more especially as no book is better calculated to direct the taste of the poetical student, or more adapted to excite a relish for just and liberal criticism.

Vivacity, ease, and purity, should form the leading features in the composition of the dialogue, which admits, more than any other species of style, of idiomatic expression. The licence, however, should be free from vulgarisms, and the general texture should exhibit the most finished specimen of colloquial simplicity, combined with elegance, which the progress of civilization can afford. In facility and animation, the diction of Spence is in no degree deficient; but it is too much loaded with idiom, and that, too, not always of the best kind; hence his style, though occasionally simply elegant, is too often careless and slovenly; owing probably to the wish of imparting to his language a conversational familiarity. This is the more to be regretted, as the taste and judgment which he displays in criticising the version of Pope are exquisitely delicate and correct.

Of these Dialogues, now almost forgotten, but yet exhibiting one of the most interesting models of English criticism, I shall insert an ample specimen; not only with the view of affording an example of their style, but of alluring, likewise, to their perusal, all who wish to learn the rare art of mingling candour and politeness with the wholesome severities of criticism.

"The designs of Painting and Poetry are so united, that to me the Poet and the Painter seem scarcely to differ in any thing, except the mean they make use of, to arrive at one and the same end. Both are to express Nature; but the materials of the one are words and sound; of the other, figure and colours. *Poetry* can paint more particularly, more largely, and with greater coherence: *Painting* is the more concise and emphatical. If *this* may excel in shewing one view distinctly, *that* can shew several in succession, without any manner of confusion. Any figure in *Painting* is confined to one attitude; but *Poetry* can give as great a variety of motion and postures, as the reality itself. What seems a paradox of art in either, is their power of expressing two *opposite passions* in the same face. Of this sort, (among a multitude of like instances) is the mother of Lewis XIII. in the Gallery of Luxembourgh; and every piece in that fine

episode which concludes the sixth Iliad. In that *picture*, the queen's face strongly expresses the pain and anguish of her condition, mixed with a regard toward her son, full of the greatest pleasure and complacency. In the *poem* we have the greater variety, and each piece is perfectly just and finished. *Hector* shews a fierceness for the war, and tenderness that inclines him to stay for a last interview; little *Astyanax* has a fondness and a terror in his eyes, at the sight of his father; while Andromache's face is all softened into a tender smile; and, at the same time, wet with the tears that fall for her *Hector*.

"I remember, says *Antiphaus*, it was to you that I was obliged for the first observation I ever met with, on these *double passions*. I have since read several things (in the Æneid as well as the works of Homer) with a pleasure perfectly new, on account of the light you then gave me into this particular: and out of a thousand places, that I have observed it in since, I know none more beautiful than that of *Achæmenides* in *Virgil*, which you mentioned to me the first time we ever talked of this subject.

"That you know (replied Philypsas) to have been always my favourite—but"—

"I must not forget here, that one of the finest of the modern *Italian* poets has expressed this

mixture of opposite passions, on an occasion which is attended with such a circumstance as exceeds any of the other. The particular in which he shews it, shews at the same time the *swiftness* of the intervening passion; and expresses, the strongest of any, how immediately one flow of spirits succeeds upon a former and quite contrary emotion. *Armida*, deserted by her *Rinaldo*, breathes nothing but fury and revenge; she pursues him in the heat of the battle; forgetful of her former passion, she aims an arrow at his heart: but see, while it is yet in its flight, how the passions vary in her face! her rage and fury soften into tenderness, and apprehension of his danger! in an instant her love is too strong for her resentment: in an instant, she dreads lest her design should be effectual, and longs to be disappointed in her aim:

> Swift flies the shaft: as swiftly flies her pray'r,
> That all its vehemence be spent in air.

"How finely are the passions blended in this piece! The transition from the extremity of fury to an excess of love, is managed in such a manner, as to be wholly imperceptible: as when two colours are lost in the shades of each other, the eye is agreeably deceived; and we are delighted with the delicacy of their union, though

unable to discover where the one commences, or the other ends.

"In this particular there is not any thing that can equal poetry, or bear to be compared with it, except its sister-art of *painting*; and certainly what makes so beautiful a figure in the finest poets, might deserve the imitation of the best painters. Was not the *Dolon* and *Calypso* of *Homer*, worthy the hand of a *Zeuxis* or *Apelles*? Would not the *Aruns* and *Achæmenides* of *Virgil* have been a fine design even for Corregio or Raphael to have worked upon?—

"There is perhaps scarce a *figure* or *manner* in poetry, which I should not imagine to have its tally in the schools of the painters: I could find it even in the very next point which comes in my way, in the *Emphatical*. Natural descriptions, as they are pictures which take in the various circumstances of a place or action, give us generally several groups of finished figures; this, on the contrary, is a way of expressing nature in poetry, not unlike sketches and first draughts in painting; and as the lines in sketches are *fewer*, and more *animated*, this must be always *concise*, and very *expressive*.

"There are several masterly strokes of the *emphatical* kind in the Odyssey: such is that speech of *Telemachus*, where he says,

Prepar'd I stand. He was but born to try
The *lot* of Man: *To suffer, and to die.**

"Such is Circe's whole speech—such, in an high degree, is the first rencounter of the hero with that Goddess.

Hence to thy fellows, dreadful she began,
Go, be a beast.—I heard, and yet was man.†

"This manner is necessary in all *sententious* passages, and *moral* reflections; 'tis often strong in expressing the *passions*, and peculiarly useful in the *sublime*. Take an instance of each from Mr. Pope.

—Pirates and conquerors, of harden'd mind,
The foes of peace, and scourges of mankind,
To whom offending men are made a prey,
When *Jove* in vengeance gives a land away:
Ev'n these, when of their ill-got spoils possess'd,
Find sure tormentors in the guilty breast:
Some voice of God close whisp'ring from within,
"Wretch! this is villany, and this is sin."‡

"The reflection upon seeing *Agamemnon* in *Hades*, is of this kind.

Now all *Atrides* is an empty shade! §

"Just after, *Atrides* speaks thus passionately in the account of his own death by the treachery of *Ægisthus*:

But not with me the direful murder ends:
These, these expir'd!—Their crime they were my friends.‖

* B. 3, l. 119. † B. 10, l. 382. ‡ B. 14, l. 110.
§ B. 11, l. 490. ‖ B. 11, l. 512.

"In the *sublime*, nothing can be higher than the language of his Gods, *Neptune* and *Jupiter*.

If such thy will.—We will it, *Jove* replies.*

"This latter is that short full way of expression so frequent in Virgil and Homer, copied perhaps by both from the admired example of it in Moses, and grown since into an *axiom* among the critics.—

"*Antiphaus* could scarce imagine, that these were all clear improvements upon Homer; he immediately consulted the passages in the original; and was surprized to find, how far they fell short of the translation; especially in the lines that answer *Circe's threat*, and the *complaint of Agamemnon*. I am pleased, says he, beyond measure, in consulting these parts of the poem, to see how much strength and force there is added to them; have you not observed more instances of this kind? impart them to me, good *Philypsas*: 'tis no matter for method or regularity; give them to me immediately."—

In a subsequent page, *Philypsas* observes that Mr. Pope has "improved much upon the original in his *poctical repetition* of the same word, the figure in which he is most frequent. Thus," he remarks, "is it used in the following lines:

* B. 13, l. 177.

A scene, where if a God should cast his sight,
A God might gaze, and wander with delight.*

Never, never wicked man was wise.†

"'Tis yet more beautiful, when the repetition holds further; as in this passage:

Transported with the song, the list'ning train
Again with loud applause demand the strain:
Again Ulysses veil'd his pensive head,
Again, unmann'd, a show'r of sorrow shed.‡

"This sometimes gives an additional solemnity, and rises stronger and stronger each line:

Celestial as thou art, yet stand deny'd:
Or swear that oath, by which the Gods are ty'd,
Swear, in thy soul no latent frauds remain,
Swear, by the vow which never can be vain.§

"This is sometimes carried yet farther; and in Virgil particularly, there is a fine instance of this sort of repetition being doubled.‖

But in nothing is this figure more beautiful, than in the *Siren's Song*: that piece of ancient music is greatly enlivened in the translation; the whole flows on in a peculiar harmony, and the chorus is very happily added in the conclusion of it.

Celestial music warbles from their tongue,
And thus the sweet deluders tune the song.

* B. 5, l. 96. † B. 2, l. 320. ‡ B. 8, l. 90.
§ B. 10, l. 410. ‖ Ecl. 8, l. 50.

O stay, oh pride of Greece! Ulysses stay!
O cease thy course, and listen to our lay!
Blest is the man ordain'd our voice to hear,
The song instructs the soul and charms the ear.
Approach! thy soul shall into raptures rise!
Approach! and learn new wisdom from the wise:
We know whate'er the kings of mighty name
Atchiev'd at *Ilion* in the field of fame;
Whate'er beneath the sun's bright journey lies.
O stay, and learn new wisdom from the wise! *

These quotations from Spence, while they sufficiently evince the beauties and defects of his style, cannot, I should imagine, fail to impress upon the reader a most favourable idea of his critical taste and acumen.†

Coexistent with Spence, flourished the celebrated Bishop SHERLOCK, a divine who supports a high character in the church, as well for the merits of his style, as the soundness of his doctrines. He commenced a publisher of sermons as early as the year 1725, and continued a very popular preacher and writer until near 1750.

Of Sherlock, Mr. Godwin has asserted, that his "elegance is rather to be found in his ideas;

* B. 12, l. 220. Essay on the Odyssey, 2d edition, 1737, 12mo, p 73, 74, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84, 85, 88, 89, and 90.

† In his beautiful "Tales of the Genii" Mr. James Ridley has given an amiable portrait of Spence under the character of the "Dervise of the Groves," whose name is "Phesoi Ecneps," or Joseph Spence, if read backwards.

and it is chiefly from a confusion of mind in his readers, that it has been transferred from its proper seat, and ascribed to his composition. His manner is for the most part close to his subject, and he disdains every thing impertinent and merely ornamental; but he is usually hard, scholastic, and even somewhat repellent in his language.

"His famous parallel between Christ and Mahomet, which is perhaps the only truly eloquent passage in his works, is indeed happily expressed. He must have been a very cursory observer of style, who does not know, that enthusiasm of sentiment seldom fails to produce a momentary happiness of language. But, as if this were wholly foreign to the writer, no sooner does he close the descriptive part, and attempt to sum up the result, than his manner becomes comparatively bald and mean." *

These strictures are more severe than just; the style of Sherlock, it is true, is in general plain, and exhibits little ornament; but its usual character is calumniated by the epithets *hard, scholastic*, and *repellent*. Though plain, it is nervous and emphatic, and in the construction of its sentences peculiarly clear and neat. That this cast of diction was the result of judgment, and not of

* Godwin's Enquirer, p. 460.

inability to impart more warmth of colouring, is evident from very many passages in his discourses, which display uncommon richness and harmony of style. The parallel between Christ and Mahomet, is only *one* among a *number* of pages that might be quoted in proof of the assertion. For instance, let us take the close of the first sermon in volume the third.

"Should the punishments of another life be, what we have but too much reason to fear they will be, what words can then express the folly of sin? Short are our days in this world, and soon they shall expire: and should religion at last prove a mere deceit, we know the worst of it; it is an error for which we cannot suffer after death; nor will the infidels there have the pleasure to reproach us with our mistake; they and we, in equal rest, shall sleep the sleep of death. But should our hopes, and their fears, prove true; should they be so unhappy, as not to die for ever; which miserable hope is the only comfort that infidelity affords; what pains and torments must they then undergo? Could I represent to you the different states of good and bad men; could I give you the prospect which the blessed martyr St. Stephen had, and shew you the blessed Jesus at the right hand of God surrounded with angels, and *the spirits of just men made perfect:* could I

open your ears to hear the never-ceasing hymns of praise, which the blessed above *sing to him that was, and is, and is to come; to the Lamb that was slain, but liveth for ever;* could I lead you through the unbounded regions of eternal day, and shew you the mutual and ever-blooming joys of saints who are at rest from their labour, and live for ever in the presence of God! or, could I change the scene, and unbar the iron gates of hell, and carry you, through solid darkness, to *the fire that never goes out*, and to *the worm that never dies*: could I shew you the apostate angels fast bound in eternal chains, or the souls of wicked men overwhelmed with torment and despair: could I open your ears to hear the deep itself groan with the continual cries of misery; cries which can never reach the throne of mercy, but return in sad echoes, and add even to the very horrors of hell! could I thus set before you the different ends of religion and infidelity, you would want no other proof to convince you, that nothing can recompense the hazard men run of being for ever miserable through unbelief. But, though neither the tongues of man nor of angels can express the joys of heaven, or describe the pains of hell; yet, if there be any truth in religion, these things are certain and near at hand." *

* Vol. 3, p. 18, 19, 6th edition, 1772, in 5 vols. 8vo.

Here the imagery, which is remarkably bold and striking, is rendered still more impressive, by the strength and harmony of the language in which it is produced to view. The subdued and plaintive theme at the commencement of this fine passage, the rapture immediately succeeding, and the tremendous close which harrows up the very soul, have each their diction so luminous and appropriate, that, in my opinion, no alteration could improve the style.

Of the ordinary language of Sherlock, of that plain but nervous diction which has distinguished him among his contemporaries, the following may be considered as an adequate specimen.

"So far is it from being an objection to the reality of grace, that the works of grace are works of reason, that the very best evidence we can have that the grace of God is in us, is this, that we live up to the pure and sincere dictates of reason. We ascribe not to grace, that we know our duty; but this we ascribe to it, that we are able to perform it. And upon this state of the case it appears, that the evidence which christians can make to themselves and others, that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them, must arise from their works of love and obedience.

"Unbelievers may have many objections to make against the operations of the Holy Spirit,

which need not affect or disturb the faith of a christian. But when they object to us the want of evidence in the works of christians, they raise a difficulty, which every believer is bound to answer for himself, or to quit his pretensions to the hopes and promises of the gospel. The confidence of some, that they have the Spirit of God, though they have nothing but their own confidence to allege in proof of it, is a conceit, unknown to the churches of God: the gospel is a stranger to it, and it was taught in some other school than that of Christ." *

As an author whose style and manner form a perfect contrast to the general diction of Sherlock, I have now to mention LORD BOLINGBROKE, who commenced a party writer at an early period of the eighteenth century. His most finished work, however, his "Idea of a Patriot King," though composed in 1738, was not published until 1749, and having received his most sedulous revision may be considered as the most perfect specimen of his style.

* Sermons, Vol. 3, p. 300, 301. Bishop Berkeley might here be quoted as an excellent writer of the Platonic Dialogue; but as his works were altogether abstruse and metaphysical, and never had a general admittance, they cannot be supposed to have operated much, if at all, in accelerating the improvement of English style.

Bolingbroke was a man of warm passions, and possessed an ardent imagination; he was likewise high in reputation as a powerful and successful orator; and he appears to have carried into his closet the same heat and impetuosity which animated his soul in the tumult of debate. Hence his style is vehement, declamatory, and highly figurative; bold, rich, and energetic, it rushes on its course like some mighty river, and bears down every obstacle which opposes its progress; but, like the torrent that we are alluding to, its very rapidity is too often destructive of its beauty and transparency. The construction of his sentences is therefore frequently incorrect, and they are not seldom rendered intricate and parenthetical, by the uncontrouled accumulation of his ideas. There is a fire, however, a spirit of vivacity in the composition of Bolingbroke, which, when accompanied, as is occasionally the case, with perspicuity and ease, must give him rank as one of the happiest models of the vehement style.

Of the extracts which I have selected from the "Patriot King," the first, on the character of Elizabeth, will convey a just idea of the usual style of Bolingbroke in this his most finished work; and the second will afford examples of that spirit, strength, and climax in the arrangement

of sentences, for which he has been so much celebrated.

"Our *Elizabeth* was queen in a limited monarchy, and reigned over a people at all times more easily led than driven; and at that time capable of being attached to their prince and their country, by a more generous principle than any of those which prevail in our days, by affection. There was a strong prerogative then in being, and the crown was in possession of greater legal power. Popularity was, however, then, as it is now, and as it must be always in mixed government, the sole true foundation of that sufficient authority and influence, which other constitutions give the prince gratis, and independently of the people, but which a king of this nation must acquire. The wise queen saw it, and she saw too, how much popularity depends on those appearances, that depend on the decorum, the decency, the grace, and the propriety of behaviour, of which we are speaking. A warm concern for the interest and honour of the nation, a tenderness for her people, and a confidence in their affections, were appearances that ran thro' her whole public conduct, and gave life and color to it. She did great things, and she knew how to set them off according to their full value, by her manner of doing them. In her private behaviour

she shewed great affability, she descended even to familiarity; but her familiarity was such as could not be imputed to her weakness, and was, therefore, most justly ascribed to her goodness. Tho' a woman, she hid all that was womanish about her: and if a few equivocal marks of coquetry appeared on some occasions, they passed like flashes of lightning, vanished as soon as they were discerned, and imprinted no blot on her character. She had private friendships, she had favourites; but she never suffered her friends to forget she was their queen."*

Speaking of the importance of the personal manners of a Patriot King, he observes that,

"It is of his personal behaviour, of his manner of living with other men, and, in a word, of his private as well as public life, that I mean to speak. It is of that decency and grace, that *bienseance* of the French, that decorum of the Latins, that πρεπον of the Greeks, which can never be reflected on any character that is not laid in virtue: but for want of which, a character that is so laid will lose, at all times, part of the lustre belonging to it, and may be sometimes not a little misunderstood and undervalued. Beauty is not separable from health, nor this

* Bolingbroke's Works, vol. 3d, p. 118, quarto edition of 1754.

lustre, said the Stoics, from virtue; but as a man may be healthful without being handsome, so he may be virtuous without being amiable.

"There are certain finishing strokes, a last hand, as we commonly say, to be given to all the works of art. When that is not given, we may see the excellency of a general design, and the beauty of some particular parts. A judge of the art may see further; he may allow for what is wanting, and discern the full merit of a complete work, in one that is imperfect. But vulgar eyes will not be so struck. The work will appear to them defective, because unfinished: so that without knowing precisely what they dislike, they may admire, but they will not be pleased. Thus in moral characters, tho' every part be virtuous and great, or tho' the few and small defects in it be concealed under the blaze of those shining qualities that compensate for them; yet is not this enough even in private life: it is less so in public life, and still less so in that of a prince.—

"This decency, this grace, this propriety of manners to character, is so essential to princes in particular, that whenever it is neglected, their virtues lose a great degree of lustre, and their defects acquire much aggravation. Nay more; by neglecting this decency and this grace, and for want of a sufficient regard to appearances, even

their virtues may betray them into failings, their failings into vices, and their vices into habits unworthy of princes and unworthy of men."*

In the year 1741, the public was presented with a work which has been usually, and upon the whole, justly, considered as a model of elegant composition. The "Life of Cicero" by MIDDLETON may indeed be esteemed, in point of style, the earliest *classical* production which we possess in the department of history. Its reputation, however, as a specimen of fine writing, is on the decline; for though it may, in this respect, be still read with some degree of pleasure, it is, without doubt, much inferior to the style of the first rate authors of the present reign. The chief defects of the composition of the "Life of Cicero" have arisen from the labour bestowed upon it: the sentences are too often, in their construction, pedantic and stiff, owing, in a great measure, to the perpetual adoption of circumlocutions, in order to avoid customary phrases and modes of expression. The Author has indeed, upon this plan, given a kind of verbose dignity to his style; but, at the same time, frequently sacrificed ease, perspicuity, and spirit. In grammatical construction, he is for the most part pure and correct; but in his choice of words he has exhibited frequent marks

* Vol. 3, p. 109, 110, 116.

of defective taste. He is occasionally elegant and precise, but more commonly appears majestic, yet encumbered, struggling under the very mass of diction which he has laboured to accumulate. He has contributed, however, to improve English composition, by affording examples of unusual correctness in the construction of his sentences, and of that roundness, plenitude, and harmony of period, for which his favourite Cicero has been so universally renowned.

The beauties and defects of the style of Middleton may be pretty accurately estimated from the following extracts; the first of which gives a summary of the education of Cicero; and the second, a most impressive description of the close of his Consulship.

"Cicero had now run through all that course of discipline, which he lays down as necessary to form *the complete orator*.—He had learnt the rudiments of grammar and languages from the ablest teachers; gone through the studies of humanity, and the politer letters, with *the poet Archias;* been instructed in philosophy by the principal professors of each sect; Phædrus *the Epicurian*, Philo *the Academic*, Diodotus *the Stoic;* acquired a perfect knowledge of the law, from the greatest lawyers, as well as the greatest statesmen of *Rome, the two Scævola's*; all which

accomplishments were but ministerial and subservient to that on which his hopes and ambition were singly placed, the reputation *of an orator*: to qualify himself therefore particularly for this, he attended the pleadings of all the speakers of his time; heard the daily lectures of the most eminent orators of Greece, and was perpetually composing somewhat at home, and declaiming under their correction: and that he might neglect nothing, which could help in any degree to improve and polish his style, he spent the intervals of his leisure in the company of the ladies; especially of those who were remarkable for a politeness of language, and whose fathers had been distinguished by a fame and reputation of their eloquence. While he studied the law, therefore, under Scævola *the Augur*, he frequently conversed with *his wife Lælia, whose discourse*, he says, *was tinctured with all the elegance of her father Lælius*, the politest speaker of his age: he was acquainted, likewise, with her daughter Mucia, who married *the great orator L. Crassus;* and with her grand-daughters, *the two Liciniæ*; one of them the wife of L. Scipio; the other of *young Marius*; who all excelled in that delicacy of the Latin tongue, which was peculiar to their families, and valued themselves on preserving and propagating it to their posterity.

"Thus adorned and accomplished, he offered himself to the bar about the age of twenty-six; not as others generally did, raw and ignorant of their business, and wanting to be formed to it by use and experience; but finished, and qualified at once to sustain any cause which should be committed to him."*

"Before we close the account of the memorable events of this year, (Cicero's Consulship,) we must not omit the mention of one, which distinguished it afterwards as a particular æra in the annals of Rome, *the birth of Octavius*, surnamed Augustus, which happened on the twenty-third of September. Velleius calls it an *accession of glory to Cicero's Consulship*: but it excites speculations rather of a different sort; *on the inscrutable methods of providence, and the short-sighted policy of man;* that in the moment when Rome was preserved from destruction, and its liberty thought to be established more firmly than ever, an infant should be thrown into the world, who, within the course of twenty years, effected what Catiline had attempted, and destroyed both Cicero and the republic. If Rome could have been saved by human counsel, it would have been saved by the skill of Cicero: but its destiny was now

* The History of the Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero, in three volumes, vol. 1, third edition, 1742, p. 36, 37.

approaching: for governments, like natural bodies, have, with the principles of their preservation, the seeds of ruin also essentially mixt in their constitution, which after a certain period begin to operate and exert themselves to the dissolution of the vital frame. These seeds had long been fermenting in the bowels of the republic; when Octavius came, peculiarly formed by nature, and instructed by art, to quicken their operation and exalt them to their maturity.

"Cicero's administration was now at an end, and nothing remained but to resign the Consulship, according to custom, in an assembly of the people, and to take the usual oath, *of his having discharged it with fidelity.* This was generally accompanied with a speech from *the expiring Consul;* and after such a year, and from such a speaker, the city was in no small expectation of what Cicero would say to them: but Metellus, one of the new Tribunes, who affected commonly to open their magistracy by some remarkable act, as a specimen of the measures which they intended to pursue, resolved to disappoint both the orator and the audience: for when Cicero had mounted the *rostra*, and was ready to perform this last act of his office, *the Tribune would not suffer him to speak, or to do any thing more, than barely take the oath;* declaring, *that he who had*

put citizens to death unheard, ought not to be permitted to speak for himself: upon which Cicero, who was never at a loss, instead of pronouncing the ordinary form of the oath, *exalting the tone of his voice*, swore out aloud, so as all the people might hear him, *that he had saved the republic and the city from ruin;* which the multitude below confirmed with an universal shout, and with one voice cried out, *that what he had sworn was true.*" *

We now approach a writer who has been almost universally praised for the beauty and simplicity of his style, the philosophic historian HUME. The appeal, however, in proof of this encomium has been usually made to his "History of England;" a production which, great as its merits assuredly are, is, in point of style, many degrees inferior to his Essays.

Hume commenced an author as early as the year 1738, by printing his "Treatise on Human Nature;" but he was little known until the year 1742; when, owing to the publication of his "Essays, moral, political, and literary," he acquired much celebrity as a writer of great depth of thought, and of great elegance of diction.

The style of these Essays, which has certainly contributed, in a high degree, to accelerate the

* Vol. 1, p. 240, 241.

progress of taste in composition, forms, with few exceptions, a model of perspicuity, simplicity, and just refinement. A few grammatical errors may be detected, and some negligencies in the construction and cadence of sentences; but, upon the whole, it is much more pure and correct than the style of his History, which is often debased by ill-chosen words, and even by colloquial vulgarisms, and merits not the very high praise which has been lavished upon it.

The Essays of Hume, in fact, sometimes present the reader with the grace and sweetness of Addison, accompanied with a higher finishing and more accurate tact in the arrangement and structure of periods; so that no language is more clear and lively, more neat and chaste, more durably and delicately pleasing to the ear, than what may be produced from the best portions of those elaborate but very sceptical disquisitions. Let us, in proof of our assertion, take a passage from the first essay of the first volume, on "*Delicacy of Taste.*"

"Nothing," remarks the philosopher, "is so improving to the temper as the study of the beauties, either of poetry, eloquence, music, or painting. They give a certain elegance of sentiment, to which the rest of mankind are strangers. The emotions which they excite are soft and

tender. They draw off the mind from the hurry of business and interest; cherish reflection; dispose to tranquillity; and produce an agreeable melancholy, which, of all dispositions of the mind, is the best suited to love and friendship.

"In the second place, a delicacy of taste is favourable to love and friendship, by confining our choice to few people, and making us indifferent to the company and conversation of the greater part of men. You will seldom find, that mere men of the world, whatever strong sense they may be endowed with, are very nice in distinguishing characters, or in marking those insensible differences and gradations, which make one man preferable to another. Any one, that has competent sense, is sufficient for their entertainment: they talk to him of their pleasure and affairs, with the same frankness that they would to another; and finding many, who are fit to supply his place, they never feel any vacancy or want in his absence. But to make use of the allusion of a celebrated French * author, the judgment may be compared to a clock or watch, where the most ordinary machine is sufficient to tell the hours; but the most elaborate alone can point out the minutes and seconds, and distinguish the smallest differences of time. One that has

* M. Fontenelle, Pluralité des Mondes, Soir 6.

well digested his knowledge both of books and men, has little enjoyment but in the company of a few select companions. He feels too sensibly, how much all the rest of mankind fall short of the notions which he has entertained. And, his affections being thus confined within a narrow circle, no wonder he carries them further, than if they were more general and undistinguished. The gaiety and frolic of a bottle companion improves with him into a solid friendship; and the ardours of a youthful appetite become an elegant passion." *

The twentieth essay, on Simplicity and Refinement, which is written in the best manner of the author, shall furnish us with another specimen.

"It is a certain rule, that wit and passion are entirely incompatible. When the affections are moved, there is no place for the imagination. The mind of man being naturally limited, it is impossible that all its faculties can operate at once: and the more any one predominates, the less room is there for the others to exert their vigour. For this reason, a greater degree of simplicity is required in all compositions, where men, and actions, and passions are painted, than in such as consist of reflections and observations. And as the former species of writing is the more

* Essays, 2 vols. 8vo. vol. 1, p. 6, 7, edit. of 1777.

engaging and beautiful, one may safely, upon this account, give the preference to the extreme of simplicity above that of refinement.

"We may also observe, that those compositions which we read the oftenest, and which every man of taste has got by heart, have the recommendation of simplicity, and have nothing surprizing in the thought, when divested of that elegance of expression, and harmony of numbers, with which it is clothed. If the merit of the composition lie in a point of wit; it may strike at first; but the mind anticipates the thought in the second perusal, and is no longer affected by it. When I read an epigram of MARTIAL, the first line recals the whole; and I have no pleasure in repeating to myself what I know already. But each line, each word in CATULLUS, has its merit; and I am never tired with the perusal of him. It is sufficient to run over COWLEY once: but PARNEL, after the fiftieth reading, is as fresh as at the first. Besides, it is with books as with women, where a certain plainness of manner and of dress is more engaging than that glare of paint, and airs, and apparel, which may dazzle the eye, but reaches not the affections. TERENCE is a modest and bashful beauty, to whom we grant every thing, because he assumes nothing, and

whose purity and nature make a durable, though not a violent impression on us." *

I shall conclude these examples of the style of Hume, with a quotation from his essay on the "Standard of Taste."

"The same HOMER who pleased at ATHENS and ROME two thousand years ago, is still admired at PARIS and at LONDON. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language, have not been able to obscure his glory. Authority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with. Envy and jealousy have too much place in a narrow circle; and even familiar acquaintance with his person may diminish the applause due to his performances: But when these obstructions are removed, the beauties which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments, immediately display their energy; and while the world endures they maintain their authority over the minds of men." †

* Vol. 1, p. 210, 211. † Vol. 1, p. 248.

The last author who contributed, previous to the appearance of the Rambler, to the improvement of English style, was MELMOTH. His "Letters of Sir Thomas Fitzosborne, on several subjects," were published in the year 1742, and have passed through numerous editions; the first edition also of his translation of the Letters of Pliny the Consul, was printed in the year 1746, the second in 1747, and the third in 1748.

The style of Melmoth, both in his original and translated works, is easy, perspicuous, and elegant. He is more correct in grammatical construction, more select in his choice of words, than any preceding writer, but he is sometimes languid and verbose. His taste, which was very refined and pure, has seldom permitted him to adopt ornament not congenial to the subject of discussion, and his diction is therefore singularly chaste and free from inflation. His language, however, where the topic demands it, is often truly animated and warm, and the encomium which he has given to the style of a friend, may be justly applied to that of his own works; *his expressions*, says he, *are glowing, but not glaring, his metaphors are natural but not common, his periods are harmonious but not poetical.** As an adequate specimen of the composition of

* Fitzosborne's Letters, p. 317, 318, tenth edition.

Melmoth, I shall transcribe his remarks upon *grace in writing*.

"When I mention *grace* as essential in constituting a fine writer, I rather hoped to have found my sentiments reflected back with a clearer light by yours; than imagined you would have called upon me to explain in form, what I only threw out by accident. To confess the truth, I know not whether, after all that can be said to illustrate this uncommon quality, it must not at last be resolved into the poet's *nequeo monstrare et sentio tantum*. In cases of this kind, where language does not supply us with proper words to express the notions of one's mind, we can only convey our sentiments in figurative terms: a defect which necessarily introduces some obscurity.

"I will not, therefore, undertake to mark out, with any sort of precision, that idea which I would express by the word *grace:* and, perhaps, it can no more be clearly described than justly defined. To give you, however, a general intimation of what I mean, when I apply that term to compositions of genius, I would resemble it to that easy air, which so remarkably distinguishes certain persons of a genteel and liberal cast. It consists, not only in the particular beauty of single parts, but arises from the general symmetry and construction of the whole. An author may

be just in his sentiments, lively in his figures, and clear in his expression; yet may have no claim to be admitted into the rank of finished writers. Those several members must be so agreeably united, as mutually to reflect beauty upon each other: their arrangement must be so happily disposed as not to admit of the least transposition, without manifest prejudice to the entire piece. The thoughts, the metaphors, the allusions, and the diction, should appear easy and natural, and seem to arise like so many spontaneous productions, rather than as the effects of art or labour.

"Whatever, therefore, is forced or affected in the sentiments; whatever is pompous or pedantic in the expression; is the very reverse of *grace*. Her mien is neither that of a pedant nor a coquet; she is regular without formality, and sprightly without being fantastical. Grace, in short, is to good writing, what a proper light is to a fine picture; it not only shews all the figures in their several proportions and relations, but shews them in the most advantageous manner.

"As gentility (to resume my former illustration) appears in the minutest action, and improves the most inconsiderable gesture; so *grace* is discovered in the placing even of a single word, or the turn of a mere expletive. Neither is this inexpressible quality confined to one species of

composition only, but extends to all the various kinds; to the humble pastoral as well as the lofty epic; from the slightest letter to the most solemn discourse.

"I know not whether Sir William Temple may not be considered as the first of our prose authors, who introduced a graceful *manner* into our language. At least, that quality does not seem to have appeared early, or spread far, amongst us. But wheresoever we may look for its origin, it is certainly to be found in its highest perfection, in the essays of a gentleman, whose writings will be distinguished so long as politeness and good sense have any admirers. That becoming air which Tully esteemed the criterion of fine composition, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is the prevailing characteristic of all that author's most elegant performances. In a word, one may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language, says of Aristophanes; that the *graces* having searched all the world round for a temple wherein they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Mr. Addison."*

That a large portion of the grace which Mr. Melmoth has so happily described in this passage,

* Fitzosborne's Letters, p. 133—136.

is to be found in his own classical pages, no scholar who has studied his writings will probably deny; nor will he hesitate to allow, that by verbal elegance and harmony of period, by delicacy of phrase and beauty of arrangement, he imparted a high degree of polish and refinement to English composition.

Of the *eight* authors which we have now enumerated as occupying the space that elapsed between Addison and Johnson, all have contributed, either by perspicuity, simplicity, energy, of modulation of style, to the progress of fine writing in this country. It must be obvious, however, that several authors, learned or popular, who flourished during this period, have been omitted; an omission easily accounted for, when it is considered, that great as might be their erudition or their powers of imagination, the style which they had formed, was rather calculated to deteriorate than improve their native language. As a profound theologian, as an acute controversialist, as an ingenious but imperious critic, *Warburton* for many years filled a large space in the public eye, but his diction was singularly slovenly, coarse, and impure. As writers of fiction in prose, as men intimately acquainted with human nature, and possessed of powers adequate, in their own department, to the representation of all her

varied passions, what nation can bring forward greater names than those of *Richardson*, *Fielding*, and *Smollet*; and yet, strange as it may appear, to their style they are, assuredly, very little indebted for the durable impressions which they have created. Than the diction of Richardson, nothing can be more careless, jejune, and incompact; than that of Fielding, nothing more nerveless, ungrammatical, and vulgar: the style of Smollet, indeed, is superior to both in spirit and animation; but it is equally incorrect, and alike void of modulation.*

When Johnson commenced his Rambler, one of his primary objects was the improvement of his native language, by the formation of a more correct and dignified style. "I have laboured," he remarks in his concluding Rambler, "to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations. Something, perhaps, I have added to the elegance of its construction, and something to the harmony of its cadence." How far he has succeeded in his efforts, and in

* I am speaking in this place, solely of his novels; the diction in his "History of England" is of another cast; he has there laboured to attain harmony of cadence, but has generally failed, and his style is frequently clogged with injudicious metaphors.

what degree fallen short of his purpose, it is now our business to enquire; and in doing this, we shall first notice the *defects*, and afterwards the *beauties* of his style.

He has laid it down as a position in the preface to his Dictionary, that "our language, for almost a century, has been deviating toward a *Gallick* structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recal it." In his attempt to correct this tendency, however, he has not applied, as was incumbent upon him, and as he professed to do, to *the wells of English undefiled*, to those *ancient volumes* whose style was grounded on a *Teutonick* original, but to the authors of ancient Rome, to a language in its genius and construction totally dissimilar to his own.

In his Life of Milton, our author has censured that great poet for his pedantry in attempting "to use English words with a foreign idiom." There is assuredly, however, not less pedantry in the reverse of this, in the plan which Johnson has adopted, of using Latin words with the English idiom. To this he was probably led, not only by his partiality to, and critical knowledge of, the Latin language, but by his attachment to the works of Sir Thomas Browne, the most copious master of the Anglo-Latin style, and by his aversion to a Gallic structure, apprehensive, as

he says, that we should be reduced to *babble a dialect of France.*

The reasons, however, which Johnson has himself assigned for the adoption of so many Latin polysyllables, are harmony and precision. "Where common words," he remarks, "were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to known objects and popular ideas; but have rarely admitted any word not authorized by former writers."* "Difference of thoughts," he observes in another place, "will produce difference of language: he that thinks with more extent than another, will want words of larger meaning; he that thinks with more subtilty, will seek for terms of more nice discrimination."†

Had our author been writing on abstruse or scientific subjects, the use of Latin derivatives, and recondite philosophical terms, would readily, for the sake of minute precision, have been acceded to; but when composing popular essays, addressed to the unlearned as well as the learned, to the female as well as the male sex, English received words, of sufficient distinctness of signification and smoothness of sound, might certainly have been discovered without much labour or

* Rambler, No. 208. † Idler, No. 70.

research. To Johnson, who, while publishing his Ramblers, was at the same time busily engaged in the compilation of his Dictionary, the powers, the strength and melody of English words, must have been accurately familiar; he knew that our language, in its native wealth, had not sunk beneath our most sublime and energetic writers; and he has himself declared, that "few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of *English* words, in which they might be expressed."* In a periodical publication, therefore, the business of which is not *to discuss the niceties of the casuist, but to direct the practice of common life*,† surely, our great lexicographer would have shewn more judgment by an exquisite selection of terms purely and radically English, than by the intrusion of so many exotics, so many abstract substantives of Latin derivation.

It is not the *occasional* use of technical terms and foreign words, that we have reason to blame in the Rambler; it is the general tenor of the style that demands censure; the characteristic of which is, that every page, and almost every sentence, though the work was intended for popular instruction, is replete with abstract substantives taken from a learned language, and therefore unintelligible to mere English readers. To point

* Preface to his Dictionary. † Vide Idler, No. 70.

out any of these gigantic strangers were superfluous; nothing more is required than to open the volume.

Next to the obscurity arising from this uniform preference of Latin derivatives, is the monotony with which it envelopes every character and subject introduced into the work. Each rank, age, sex, and occupation, speaks a similar language; a language, too, so far removed from simplicity, as frequently to throw an air of burlesque over what was intended to be serious and monitory. "All the correspondents of the Rambler," observes Mr. Burrowes, "seem infected with the same literary contagion, and the Johnsonian distemper "appears" to have been equally communicated to all. Thus Papilius talks of 'garrulity, erratic industry, and heterogeneous notions, dazzling the attention with sudden scintillations of conceit.' 'Victoria passes through the cosmetic discipline, covered with emollients, and punished with artificial excoriations.' Misocapelus tells of his 'officinal state, adhesions of trade, and ambulatory projects;' and Hypertatus describes the 'flaccid sides of a foot-ball swelling out into stiffness and extension,' and talks of 'concentration of understanding, barometrical pneumatology,' and 'tenuity of a defecated air.' In such writings the hand of the master must be

immediately perceived; the existence of the imaginary correspondents cannot even for a moment be believed; and the Rambler stands convicted of an ineffectual and unnecessary attempt to raise his own consequence by forging letters to himself.

"The second occasion on which this fault is equally glaring, is where ordinary, or perhaps mean, subjects become necessary to be treated of; and a few instances from our author may well warrant my asserting that on such occasions, as he himself says less deservedly of Dr. Young,—'burlesque cannot go beyond him.' Thus a calamity which will not admit being complained of, is, in Johnson's language, such as 'will not justify the acerbity of exclamation, or support the solemnity of vocal grief:' to deny and to profess, are to 'pronounce the monosyllables of coldness and the sonorous periods of respectful profession:' when the skillet is watched on the fire, we see it 'simmer with the due degree of heat, and snatch it off at the moment of projection:' for sun-set, we read 'the gentle coruscations of declining day;' and for washing the face with exactness, we have, 'washing with oriental scrupulosity.' Mean and vulgar expressions cannot have a more powerful recommendation, than that one of the ablest

writers in the English language could only thus avoid them." *

The *Grammatical Inaccuracies* of Johnson are but few; he was indeed, in the year 1750, by many degrees, the most correct writer that had then appeared in the language; and his example has had such influence on our literature, that scarcely an author of any authority is now to be found who is liable to censure for deficiencies with regard to grammar. It is, however, necessary, in proportion to the reputation which a writer has obtained, that his faults of this kind, although trivial, be accurately pointed out, in order to prevent inferior candidates for fame adopting the blemishes together with the beauties of genius. Nearly all the deviations from correct grammar that are discoverable in the pages of the Rambler, may be reduced to three heads; namely, the substitution of the imperfect tense for the perfect participle; the substitution of the indicative for the subjunctive mood, and the use of the plural verb with the disjunctive conjunction. Of these anomalies, I shall present the reader with a few instances in the order in which they have been enumerated.

1. Rambler, N° 1. "We are not condemned to

* Essay on the Style of Dr. Johnson. Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. 1, for 1787.

toil through half a folio, to be convinced that the writer has *broke* his promise."

Rambler, N° 46. "I have been informed how every estate in the neighbourhood was originally *got*."

Rambler, N° 60. "Thus Sallust, the great master of nature, has not *forgot*."

2. Rambler, N° 1. "If he *finds*"—"if he *thinks*."

Rambler, N° 4. "If the power of example *is* so great."

Rambler, N° 21. "Whether he *continues* or *ceases* to write."

Rambler, N° 74. "Though it *bursts* not out."

Rambler, N° 74. Unless his superiority *appears*."

Rambler, N° 75. "If there *is*."

Rambler, N° 77. "Though it *is* evident"—"yet."

3. Rambler, N° 99. "Those whom wisdom or virtue *have* placed."

It is a law of English grammar, that the conjunctions *if*, *though*, *unless*, *whether*, &c. when contingency or doubt is implied, require the subjunctive mood; and against this canon Johnson has very generally transgressed.

To the desire of imparting unusual dignity and importance to his diction, is to be attributed the

numerous *licentious constructions and inversions* which characterize our author's most elaborate works, and especially his Rambler. One great engine in effecting these purposes, and which has occasioned many of the peculiarities of his style, has been the almost perpetual substitution of substantives for the other parts of speech. Accordingly in the sentences of Johnson, the personal pronoun is either omitted, or deprived of its customary station; and in its place the instrument, or motive, or quality, which is usually employed by others in the oblique case, takes the lead; where likewise in common construction, the adjective agrees with the substantive, a new substantive is formed from the adjective governing the former in the possessive case. One class of substantives, however, our author seems to have neglected; the participle of the verb used substantively is rarely to be found in his pages, though employed by our first writers, and authorized by our first grammarians. "Some arguments will be necessary to prove," remarks Mr. Burrowes, "that the words, renewing, vanishing, shadowing and recalling, should give place to 'renovation, evanescence, adumbration and revocation,' when it is considered, that all who understand English know the meaning of the former, while the latter are

ntelligible to such only of them as understand Latin." *

It is not meant to be inferred, however, that these leviàtions from the customary construction are uniformly injudicious; they are, on the contrary, ;ometimes productive of great beauty, energy, and strength; it is their indiscriminate use only that we reprobate, which, together with his perpetual endeavours after magnificence and harmony, have given to him, more than to any other writer, the garb of a rigid mannerist. The parallelisms, the triads, and the antitheses of the Rambler, occasionally the sources of great richness and splendour, are so abundantly employed as to pall upon the ear; and if, as is frequently the case, the subject demand rather simplicity than ornament, their adoption must excite either ridicule or disgust.

If relinquishing, however, the view of its defects, we turn our attention to the *beauties* of our author's style, we shall find an ample theme for praise and admiration. Where the topic is religious, moral, or sublime, no writer has clothed his ideas in more appropriate terms, or expressed them with equal harmony, dignity, and energy. He has judiciously avoided, in the solemn march of his periods, all ellipses of the relative pronoun; and in this respect he is the most correct model

* Essay on the Style of Dr. Johnson. Transactions, p. 47.

that we possess. In conversation, or in epistolary correspondence, the ellipsis may be used with advantage, inasmuch as it contributes to rapidity and ease; but in elevated and didactic composition, in all works which aspire to the character of correct elegance, it should be deemed an unwarrantable omission.

Precision in the adoption and use of terms, one of the first requisites toward a perspicuous style, is peculiarly the characteristic of Johnson's composition; for, though his words are frequently on a gigantic scale, abstract, and of classic derivation, they are formed with a strict adherence to the analogy of the English language; they are accurately discriminated from each other, perfectly determinate in their meaning, and exclusively appropriated to their respective ideas. Hence, however definite may be the thoughts of our author, his language will be found accurately to express his conceptions, and will, consequently, to the learned reader prove uncommonly distinct, clear, and luminous.

To verbal precision it was the perpetual effort of Johnson to add all that harmony and splendour could confer; to words, therefore, peculiarly forcible and sonorous, he has given a construction and an arrangement admirably calculated to impart the utmost dignity, melody, and nerve.

Parallelisms, alliteration, verbal recurrences, and an abundant use of metaphorical expression, are some of the chief instruments to which he has had recourse. In the employment of metaphor he has been singularly happy; he has seldom, if ever, confounded the literal with the figurative sense; both his metaphors and similies, therefore, are consistent and complete in themselves, and display a resemblance sufficiently close to form the intended picture and impression on the mind. Pointed phrases, measured pauses, and correspondent lengths of period, are, likewise, for the purposes of strength and harmony, in constant employ through the pages of the Rambler, and are very frequently productive of the most pleasing effects upon the ear, and of that richness and fulness of melody so well calculated to excite the emotions of elevation and grandeur.

The result of these exertions has been, what the author ever held in view, the formation of a style perfectly original, and greatly more correct, dignified, and majestic, than any to which we had been accustomed. If we compare, indeed, the diction of any writer previous to the appearance of the Rambler with the style of that celebrated work, we must necessarily be astonished at the contrast; the warmth, the strength, and magnificence of colouring which give such life

and vigour to the periods of Johnson, are very sparingly discoverable in the works of his predecessors; at the same time it must be confessed, that in sweetness, simplicity and ease, he is but too often their inferior.

As specimens of the style of Johnson, and with the view of completing the series of examples that we have already given from the ablest writers in the language, we shall adduce three quotations, taken from the Rambler and Adventurer; the first on a *didactic*, the second on a *moral*, and the third on a *religious* subject; passages which will place in a very striking light the prominent peculiarities and excellencies of the most splendid and powerful moralist of which this country can boast.

Animadverting on the necessity of accommodating knowledge to the purposes of life, the Rambler thus proceeds:

"To lessen that disdain with which scholars are inclined to look on the common business of the world, and the unwillingness with which they condescend to learn what is not to be found in any system of philosophy, it may be necessary to consider, that though admiration is excited by abstruse researches and remote discoveries, yet pleasure is not given, nor affection conciliated, but by softer accomplishments, and qualities more

easily communicable to those about us. He that can only converse upon questions, about which only a small part of mankind has knowledge sufficient to make them curious, must lose his days in unsocial silence, and live in the crowd of life without a companion. He that can only be useful in great occasions, may die without exerting his abilities, and stand a helpless spectator of a thousand vexations which fret away happiness, and which nothing is required to remove but a little dexterity of conduct and readiness of expedients.

"No degree of knowledge attainable by man is able to set him above the want of hourly assistance, or to extinguish the desire of fond endearments and tender officiousness; and therefore, no one should think it unnecessary to learn those arts by which friendship may be gained. Kindness is preserved by a constant reciprocation of benefits or interchange of pleasures; but such benefits only can be bestowed, as others are capable to receive, and such pleasures only imparted, as others are qualified to enjoy.

"By this descent from the pinnacles of art no honour will be lost; for the condescensions of learning are always overpaid by gratitude. An elevated genius employed in little things, appears, to use the simile of *Longinus*, like the sun in his

evening declination; he remits his splendour but retains his magnitude, and pleases more though he dazzles less.*

The following passage on the iniquity of revenge, and on the meanness of regulating our conduct by the opinions of men, is alike eminent for its style and for its sentiments; the purest morality is here clothed in diction powerfully impressive.

"A wise man will make haste to forgive, because he knows the true value of time, and will not suffer it to pass away in unnecessary pain. He that willingly suffers the corrosions of inveterate hatred, and gives up his days and nights to the gloom of malice and perturbations of stratagem, cannot surely be said to consult his ease. Resentment is an union of sorrow with malignity, a combination of a passion which all endeavour to avoid, with a passion which all concur to detest. The man who retires to meditate mischief, and to exasperate his own rage; whose thoughts are employed only on means of distress and contrivances of ruin; whose mind never pauses from the remembrance of his own sufferings, but to indulge some hope of enjoying the calamities of another, may justly be numbered among the most miserable of human beings,

* Rambler, No. 137.

among those who are guilty without reward, who have neither the gladness of prosperity nor the calm of innocence.

"Whoever considers the weakness both of himself and others will not long want persuasives to forgiveness. We know not to what degree of malignity any injury is to be imputed; or how much its guilt, if we were to inspect the mind of him that committed it, would be extenuated by mistake, precipitance, or negligence; we cannot be certain how much more we feel than was intended to be inflicted, or how much we increase the mischief to ourselves by voluntary aggravations. We may charge to design the effects of accident; we may think the blow violent only because we have made ourselves delicate and tender; we are on every side in danger of error and of guilt, which we are certain to avoid only by speedy forgiveness.

"From this pacific and harmless temper, thus propitious to others and ourselves, to domestick tranquillity and to social happiness, no man is withheld but by pride, by the fear of being insulted by his adversary, or despised by the world.

"It may be laid down as an unfailing and universal axiom, that "all pride is abject and mean." It is always an ignorant, lazy, or cowardly acquiescence in a false appearance of excellence, and

proceeds not from consciousness of our attainments, but insensibility of our wants.

"Nothing can be great which is not right. Nothing which reason condemns can be suitable to the dignity of the human mind. To be driven by external motives from the path which our own heart approves, to give way to any thing but conviction, to suffer the opinion of others to rule our choice or overpower our resolves, is to submit tamely to the lowest and most ignominious slavery, and to resign the right of directing our own lives.

"The utmost excellence at which humanity can arrive, is a constant and determinate pursuit of virtue without regard to present dangers or advantage; a continual reference of every action to the divine will; an habitual appeal to everlasting justice; and an unvaried elevation of the intellectual eye to the reward which perseverance only can obtain. But that pride which many, who presume to boast of generous sentiments, allow to regulate their measures, has nothing nobler in view than the approbation of men, of beings whose superiority we are under no obligation to acknowledge, and who, when we have courted them with the utmost assiduity, can confer no valuable or permanent reward; of beings who ignorantly judge of what they do not understand,

or partially determine what they never have examined; and whose sentence is therefore of no weight till it has received the ratification of our own conscience.

"He that can descend to bribe suffrages like these at the price of his innocence; he that can suffer the delight of such acclamations to withhold his attention from the commands of the universal sovereign, has little reason to congratulate himself upon the greatness of his mind; whenever he awakes to seriousness and reflection, he must become despicable in his own eyes, and shrink with shame from the remembrance of his cowardice and folly.

"Of him that hopes to be forgiven, it is indispensably required that he forgive. It is therefore superfluous to urge any other motive. On this great duty eternity is suspended; and to him that refuses to practise it the throne of mercy is inaccessible, and the SAVIOUR of the world has been born in vain." *

Admirably, however, as these noble precepts are expressed, the specimen that we have next to quote will, it is probable, be deemed still superior both in diction and imagery. The close is, indeed, one of the most exquisite and sublime passages in the works of its eloquent author. Speaking of

* Rambler, No. 185.

those who retire from the world that "they may employ more time in the duties of religion; that they may regulate their actions with stricter vigilance, and purify their thoughts by more frequent meditation," he adds,

"To men thus elevated above the mists of mortality, I am far from presuming myself qualified to give directions. On him that appears 'to pass through things temporal,' with no other care than 'not to lose finally the things eternal,' I look with such veneration as inclines me to approve his conduct in the whole, without a minute examination of its parts; yet I could never forbear to wish, that while Vice is every day multiplying seducements, and stalking forth with more hardened effrontery, Virtue would not withdraw the influence of her presence, or forbear to assert her natural dignity by open and undaunted perseverance in the right. *Piety practised in solitude, like the flower that blooms in the desart, may give its fragrance to the winds of heaven, and delight those unbodied spirits that survey the works of* GOD *and the actions of men; but it bestows no assistance upon earthly beings, and however free from taints of impurity, yet wants the sacred splendor of beneficence.**

It has been the opinion of many of the friends

* Adventurer, No. 126.

of Johnson, of Mr. Boswell, Sir John Hawkins, and Mr. Murphy, and through them of the public in general, that the essays in the Rambler were written apparently without much effort, without any of the *limæ labor* which compositions so elegant and correct would lead the critic to suppose had been assiduously bestowed upon them. The fact is, that Johnson, having once well weighed the subject in his mind, had, from an habitual practice of using the most correct and forcible language on every occasion, the most copious stores of diction at command; and most usually, after having written with great rapidity, sent his sheets to the press without either transcription or revision. That he deserted his offspring, however, as these gentlemen conceived, after thus committing it to the public eye, is now known to be an idea altogether unfounded; and it is a most extraordinary circumstance, that the very elaborate correction which he subsequently bestowed on these papers should have escaped the detection of his most intimate associates. For the discovery we are indebted to Mr. Alexander Chalmers, who in his preface to the Rambler, having quoted the three biographers of Johnson, thus proceeds:

"Such are the opinions of those friends of Dr. Johnson who had long lived in his society, had

studied his writings, and were eager to give to the public every information by which its curiosity to know the history of so eminent a character might be gratified. But by what fatality it has happened that they were ignorant of the vast labour Dr. Johnson employed in correcting this work after it came from the first press, it is not easy to determine. This circumstance indeed might not fall within the scope of Mr. MURPHY's elegant essay; but had it been known to Sir JOHN HAWKINS or to Mr. BOSWELL, they would undoubtedly have been eager to bring it forward as a prominent part of Dr. Johnson's literary history. Mr. Boswell has given us some various readings of the 'Lives of the Poets;' and the reader will probably agree with him, that although the author's 'amendments in that work are for the better, there is nothing of the *pannus affatus:* the texture is uniform, and indeed what had been there at first is very seldom unfit to have remained.'*

* "These were the alterations made by the author in the manuscript, or in the proof before publication for the second edition. Mr. Boswell does not seem to have known that Dr. Johnson made so many alterations for the *third edition*, as to induce Mr. Nichols to collect them in an octavo pamphlet of three sheets closely printed, which was given to the purchasers of the second *octavo* edition. Since Mr. Nichols obligingly furnished me with the history of this pamphlet, I have been the less surprized at Mr. Boswell's not suspecting the alterations in the Rambler."

At the conclusion of these various readings he offers an apology, of which I may be permitted to avail myself. 'Should it be objected, that many of my various readings are inconsiderable, those who make the objection will be pleased to consider, that such small particulars are intended for those who are nicely critical in composition, to whom they will be an acceptable collection.'

"Is it not surprizing, that this friend and companion of our illustrious author, who has obliged the public with the most perfect delineation ever exhibited of any human being, and who declared so often that he was determined

To lose no drop of that immortal man;

that one so inquisitive after the most trifling circumstance connected with Dr. Johnson's character or history, should have never heard or discovered that Dr. Johnson almost RE-WROTE the RAMBLER after the first folio edition? Yet the fact was, that he employed the *limæ laborem* not only on the second, but on the third edition, to an extent, I presume, never known in the annals of literature, and may be said to have carried Horace's rule far beyond either its letter or spirit:

Vos O
——— carmen reprehendite, quod non
Multa dies et multa litura coercuit, atque
Perfectum decies non castigavit ad unguem.

Never the verse approve, and hold as good,
Till many a day and many a blot has wrought
The polish'd work, and chasten'd ev'ry thought,
By tenfold labour to perfection brought.
COLMAN.

"The alterations made by Dr. Johnson in the second and third editions of the RAMBLER far exceed SIX THOUSAND; a number which may perhaps justify the use of the word *re-wrote*, although it must not be taken in its literal acceptation. If it be asked, of what nature are these alterations, or why that was altered which the world thought perfect, the author may be allowed to answer for himself. Notwithstanding its fame while printing in single numbers, the encomiums of the learned, and the applause of friends, he knew its imperfections, and determined to remove them. He foresaw that upon this foundation his future fame would rest, and he determined that the superstructure thrown up in haste should be strengthened and perfected at leisure. A few passages from N° 169 will explain his sentiments on this subject.

"'Men have sometimes appeared, of such transcendent abilities, that their slightest and most cursory performances excel all that labour and study can enable meaner intellects to compose; as there are regions of which the spontaneous

products cannot be equalled in other soils by care and culture. But it is no less dangerous for any man to place himself in this rank of understanding, and fancy that he is born to be illustrious without labour, than to omit the cares of husbandry, and expect from his ground the blossoms of Arabia.'—'Among the writers of antiquity I remember none except *Statius*, who ventures to mention the speedy production of his writings, either as an extenuation of his faults, or as a proof of his facility. Nor did Statius, *when he considered himself as a candidate for lasting reputation, think a closer attention unnecessary;* but amidst all his pride and indigence, the two great hasteners of modern poems, employed twelve years upon the Thebaid, and thinks his claim to renown proportionate to his labour.'—'To him, whose eagerness of praise hurries his productions soon into the light, many imperfections are unavoidable, *even where the mind furnishes the materials, as well as regulates their disposition, and nothing depends upon search or information.* Delay opens new veins of thought, the subject dismissed for a time appears with a new train of dependent images, the accidents of reading or conversation supply new ornaments or allusions, or mere intermission of the fatigue of thinking enables the mind to collect new force and make new excursions.'

"With such sentiments it must appear at least *probable*, that our author would in his own case endeavour to repair the mischiefs of haste or negligence; but as these were not very obvious to his friends, they made no inquiry after them, nor entertained any suspicion of the labour he endured to render his writings more worthy of their praise; and when his contemporaries had departed, he might not think it necessary to tell a new generation that he had not reached perfection at once.—On one occasion Mr. Boswell came so near the question, that if Dr. Johnson had thought it worth entering upon, he had a very fair opportunity. Being asked by a lady, whether he thought he could make his RAMBLER better, he answered that he certainly could.—BOSWELL. I'll lay you a bet, Sir, you cannot.—JOHNSON. But I will, Sir, if I choose. I shall make the best of them you shall pick out, better.—BOSWELL. But you may add to them; I will not allow of that.—JOHNSON. Nay, Sir, there are three ways of making them better,—*putting out*, *adding*, or *correcting*." *

In corroboration of his assertions, Mr. Chalmers has transcribed N° 180 of the original folio Rambler, marking the variations by *italics*. To enable

* Historical and Biographical Preface to the Rambler, p. 25—29.

my readers, however, to judge of the general nature of these alterations, a shorter specimen will, I think, suffice; and I shall therefore copy a few paragraphs from the folio edition of the extract already given * from N° 185 on the Iniquity of Revenge, distinguishing the various readings by *italics*.

"The man who retires to meditate mischief, and to exasperate his own rage; whose thoughts are employed only on *scenes* of distress and contrivances of ruin; whose mind never pauses from the remembrance of his own sufferings, but to indulge some hope of enjoying the *miseries* of another; may justly be numbered among the most miserable of human beings."

"Nothing can be great which is not right. Nothing which reason condemns can be suitable to the dignity of the human mind. *To permit ourselves* to be driven by external motives from the *way* which our own heart approves; to give way to any thing but conviction; to suffer the opinion of others to *over*rule our choice, *and* overpower our resolves, is to submit tamely to the lowest and most ignominious slavery, and to resign the right of directing our own lives."

"That pride which many, who *yet* presume to boast of *enlarged and* generous sentiments, allow

* Vide p. 268—271.

to regulate their measures, has nothing *higher or* nobler in view than the *favour and* approbation of men."

"He that can descend to bribe suffrages like these at the price of his innocence; he *who* can suffer the delight of such acclamations to *suspend* his attention *to* the commands of the universal Sovereign; *he that suffers himself to be lulled by such flattery into negligence of his duty;* has *very* little reason to congratulate himself upon the greatness of his mind: *but*, whenever he awakes to seriousness and reflection, must become despicable in his own eyes, and shrink with shame from the *contemplation* of his cowardice and folly."

That these alterations are for the better cannot be denied, and the same unremitting attention to correctness and improvement is visible, upon collation, through every page of the Rambler; a circumstance which should teach aspiring genius how necessary, even to the greatest abilities, is diligent and patient revision.

The publication of the Rambler produced a very rapid revolution in the tone of English composition; an elevation and dignity, an harmony and energy, a precision and force of style, previously unknown in the history of our literature, speedily became objects of daily emulation; and the school of Johnson increased with such celerity,

that it soon embraced the greater part of the rising literary characters of the day, and was consequently founded on such a basis as will not easily be shaken by succeeding modes. Of his immediate contemporaries, who strove to wield the weapons of Achilles, Mr. Courtenay, in his "Poetical Review of the moral and literary Character of Dr. Johnson," has given us, in very elegant verse, the following discriminative catalogue:

By Nature's gifts ordain'd mankind to rule,
He, like a Titian, form'd his brilliant school,
And taught congenial spirits to excel,
While from his lips impressive wisdom fell.
Our boasted GOLDSMITH felt the sov'reign sway,
From him deriv'd the sweet yet nervous lay.
To Fame's proud cliff he bade our Raphael rise;
Hence REYNOLDS' pen with REYNOLDS' pencil vies.
With Johnson's flame melodious BURNEY glows,
While the grand strain in smoother cadence flows.
And you, MALONE, to critic learning dear,
Correct and elegant, refin'd tho' clear,
By studying him acquir'd that classic taste
Which high in Shakspeare's fane thy statue plac'd.
Near Johnson STEEVENS stands on scenic ground,
Acute, laborious, fertile, and profound.
Ingenious HAWKESWORTH to this school we owe,
And scarce the pupil from the tutor know.
Here early parts accomplish'd JONES sublimes,
And science blends with Asia's lofty rhymes:
Harmonious JONES! who in his splendid strains
Sings Camdeo's sports on Agra's flow'ry plains!

In Hindu fictions while we fondly trace
Love and the Muses, deck'd with Attic grace.
Amid these names can Boswell be forgot,
Scarce by North Britons now esteem'd a Scot?
Who, to the sage devoted from his youth,
Imbib'd from him the sacred love of truth,
The keen research, the exercise of mind,
And that best art, the art to know mankind.—
Nor was his energy confin'd alone
To friends around his philosophic throne;
Its influence wide improv'd our letter'd isle,
And lucid vigour mark'd the gen'ral style.
As Nile's proud waves, swoln from their oozy bed,
First o'er the neighb'ring meads majestic spread;
Till gath'ring force, they more and more expand,
And with new virtue fertilize the land.

To the celebrated scholars which Mr. Courtenay has thus commemorated for their casual imitation of the style of Johnson, may be *now* added many more writers of acknowledged genius, and whose works are calculated to impart a very increased value to the language in which they are composed. The resemblance has with many of them been unintentional, and is consequently a strong proof of the wide influence which the diction of Johnson had already acquired over the literature of his country. When such writers as Dr. Robertson, Dr. Blair, Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Burke, Dr. Leland, Madame D'Arblay, Dr. Ferguson, Dr. Knox, Dr. Stuart, Dr. Parr, Dr. Gillies, Archdeacon

Nares, Mr. Mackenzie, Mr. Chalmers, Mr. Roscoe, and Dr. Anderson, can be brought forward as having, in a greater or less degree, founded their style on that of the author of the Rambler, it may be presumed that the merits of the model which they had chosen, or unconsciously imitated, must have been great. In fact, the adoption of the style of Johnson by the Critic, the Orator, and the Historian, has been frequently attended with the best effects; as the weight, the splendor, and dignity of the subjects have often been such as would most happily harmonize with the strong and nervous periods of their prototype. On topics of a more familiar kind, however; on topics which detail the history of minute manners, where humour, irony, and delicate satire are demanded; it surely would be no mark of judgment to employ the elaborate and sonorous phraseology so uniformly characteristic of the lucubrations of the Rambler. The Novel and the familiar periodical Essay seldom require the grand and stately march of the Johnsonian period; Goldsmith, Mackenzie, and Madam D'Arblay have occasionally adopted, it is true, the splendour and force of Joshnon with great felicity; but the general cast of their diction is widely different; on the contrary, the Essays of Dr. Knox, though truly valuable for their moral and literary wealth, are, in point of composition,

too studiously and exclusively copies from this great master. It has been too generally forgotten, indeed, that, bold, impressive, and magnificent as is the language of Johnson when occupied on themes of great importance, it has frequently been his misfortune to lavish it upon subjects too delicate to support its weight; on subjects where ease and plainness only were required, where sonorous words served only to excite burlesque, and elaborate periods only to encumber.

To him, however, who possesses a correct taste and a strong discriminative judgment, the study of the style of Johnson must be attended with the best results; he will have before him specimens of the noblest and the richest diction of which our literature can boast; a diction, indeed, from its nature considerably limited in its due application; but when employed on subjects of true dignity and serious moment, to record the labours of the hero or the legislator, or to clothe with fresh energy the maxims of virtue and of piety, perhaps unparalleled in the powers of impression.

If we turn from the style of the Ramblers, to the consideration of their merit in the delineation of character and the exhibition of humour, we shall find abundant reason to conclude that Johnson was a most accurate and discriminating observer of human life in all its various shades and

modifications. Though destined, during the most vigorous portion of his existence, to obtain a precarious, and very often a most scanty support, by the daily labours of his pen, he was yet enabled, in consequence of his powers, and rapidity of execution, to pass much of his time in the bosom of society. Excelling in conversation, expert in appreciating and drawing forth the talents of his companions, and often anxious, from morbid sensation, to escape from himself, he delighted not only in the frequent association of his intimate friends, but in that variety and information which are to be derived from mingling with every class of mankind. As he affirmed of himself, he had been "running about the world more than almost any body;" and the result of this habit was, in a mind uncommonly retentive and acute, a most exuberant fund of character and anecdote.

To stores thus ample and rich was added a strong but peculiar vein of humour; widely different, indeed, from the delicate and indirect satire of Addison, but nearly as powerful, and much more highly coloured. Had the language of Johnson been more plastic and accommodating, this talent would have appeared still more prominent; for, owing to the unvarying swell of his diction, which almost necessarily induces a tone of mind inimical to ridicule, his object has

sometimes escaped the penetration of his readers; though it must be noticed, that occasionally the humour has been unintentionally heightened by the singular contrast of style and subject.

"Johnson," says Mr. Murphy, "had a fund of humour, but he did not know it;" * an assertion which appears extremely paradoxical when applied to a man of strong intellect. In fact, Johnson was in conversation, when the subject did not admit of argument or contest, more distinguishable for humour than in composition; and the club or private party was frequently protracted to a late hour through the mere fascination of his pleasantry and powers of ridicule. "In the talent of humour, observes Sir John Hawkins, there hardly ever was his equal, except perhaps among the old comedians, such as Tarleton, and a few others mentioned by Cibber. By means of this, he was enabled to give to any relation that required it, the graces and aids of expression, and to discriminate with the nicest exactness the characters of those whom it concerned. In aping this faculty, I have seen Warburton disconcerted, and when he would fain have been thought a man of pleasantry, not a little out of countenance." †

* Essay, p. 159.

† Hawkins's Life of Johnson, p. 258, 259.

That the author of the Rambler, however artificial might be his language, could, from general observation, delineate characters so accordant to individual nature, as to be actually claimed by imaginary sufferers, we have a pleasant proof from the pen of Mrs. Piozzi. "When first the Rambler," she relates, "came out in separate numbers, as they were the objects of attention to multitudes of people, they happened, as it seems, particularly to attract the notice of a society who met every Saturday evening, during the summer, at Rumford in Essex, and were known by the name of the Bowling-green Club. These men, seeing one day the character of Leviculus the fortune-hunter, or Tetrica the old maid; another day, some account of a person who spent his life in hoping for a legacy, or of him who is always prying into other folk's affairs, began sure enough to think they were betrayed; and that someone of the coterie sat down to divert himself by giving to the public the portrait of all the rest. Filled with wrath against the traitor of Rumford, one of them resolved to write to the printer and enquire the author's name; Samuel Johnson was the reply. No more was necessary; Samuel Johnson was the name of the curate, and soon did each begin to load him with reproaches for turning his friends into ridicule in a manner

so cruel and unprovoked. In vain did the guiltless curate protest his innocence; one was sure that Aliger meant Mr. Twigg, and that Cupidus was but another name for neighbour Baggs; till the poor parson, unable to contend any longer, rode to London, and brought them full satisfaction concerning the writer; who from his own knowledge of general manners, quickened by a vigorous and warm imagination, had happily delineated, though unknown to himself, the members of the Bowling-green Club."*

Occasionally, however, his characters were intended as copies of real life; and among these, Mrs. Piozzi has observed, that "the character of Prospero in the fourth volume of the Rambler, Garrick took to be his; and I have heard the author say," she proceeds, "that he never forgave the offence. Sophron was likewise a picture drawn from reality; and by Gelidus the philosopher, he meant to represent Mr. Coulson, a mathematician, who formerly lived at Rochester. The man immortalized for purring like a cat, was, as he told me, one Busby, a proctor in the Commons. He who barked so ingeniously, and then called the drawer to drive away the dog, was father to Dr. Salter of the Charter-house. He who sung a song, and by correspondent motions

* Piozzi's Anecdotes, p. 233, 234, 235.

of his arm chalked out a giant on the wall, was one Richardson, an attorney."*

The talents of Johnson for humour and delineation of character will be best pointed out, however, by a minute review of what he has effected in these departments during the course of his periodical labours. In the Rambler, N° 12, containing a letter from a young woman who applies in London for service, may be selected not only as an instance of humour and close observation, but of what the author could effect, when, dropping his customary state, he chose to adopt a style of simplicity and ease. The characters of *Polyphilus* and *Anthea*, in Nos. 19 and 34, the first exposing the folly of ranging from one study to another, the second ridiculing the affectation of cowardice in the female sex, are drawn with great spirit and satirical force.

Though Johnson possessed little taste for the business or the pleasures of the country, he appears to have viewed both with an observing eye; and he has selected from rural life and occupations, especially in the female department, several subjects very happily susceptible of ludicrous representation. Of this description are the mischiefs of rural faction, in N° 46; the portrait of a Housewife in the country, in N° 51; and the

* Piozzi's Anecdotes, p. 49.

character of Mrs. Busy, in N° 138. These s
ciently prove, what would otherwise not l
been readily conceived, that our author was i
mately acquainted with the various employm
of domestic life in the country; and that
from the farm-yard and the stable, the kit
and the dairy, he could draw abundant mate
for humourous delineation.

N° 59, which contains the character of Sc
rius the Screech-owl, gave birth to the Cro
of Goldsmith in the Good-Natured Man, an
a just and poignant ridicule of a very trouble
species of eccentricity. The introductory m
in this essay includes an assertion to which
life of Johnson was nearly a perpetual contra
tion. "Though I have," says he, "like the
of mankind, many failings and weaknesses, I l
not yet, by either friends or enemies, been cha
with superstition." Now, it is certain, that
Johnson and his entertaining biographer,
well, were singularly addicted to a love of
mysterious; the latter has indeed endeavoure
disprove the charge of credulity so often atta
to the character of his friend, but with so l
success, that from his own life of the Doctor
strongest testimonies in behalf of the accusa
may be drawn. Not only was Johnson a beli
in the re-appearance of the departed, but he

likewise inclined to give credit to the existence of witches. In defence of the reality of apparitions, he would observe, that "a total disbelief of them is adverse to the opinion of the existence of the soul between death and the last day; the question simply is, whether departed spirits ever have the power of making themselves perceptible to us; a man who thinks he has seen an apparition, can only be convinced himself; his authority will not convince another, and his conviction, if rational, must be founded on being told something which cannot be known but by supernatural means."——*

"Talking of ghosts, he said, he knew one friend, who was an honest man and a sensible man, who told him he had seen a ghost, old Mr. Edward Cave, the printer at St. John's Gate. He said, Mr. Cave did not like to talk of it, and seemed to be in great horror whenever it was mentioned. BOSWELL. 'Pray, Sir, what did he say was the appearance?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, something of a shadowy being.'

"I mentioned witches, and asked him what they properly meant. JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, they properly mean those who make use of the aid of evil spirits.' BOSWELL. 'There is, no doubt, Sir, a general report and belief of their

* Boswell's Life, vol. 1, p. 96.

having existed.' JOHNSON. 'You have not only the general report and belief, but you have many voluntary solemn confessions.' He did not affirm any thing positively upon a subject which it is the fashion of the times to laugh at as a matter of absurd credulity. He only seemed willing, as a candid enquirer after truth, however strange and inexplicable, to shew that he understood what might be urged for it."*

The author of the Rambler was, also, a strict observer of several superstitious practices; one of these was "his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot, (I am not certain which,) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion."†

* Boswell's Life, vol. 2, p. 175, 176.

† Boswell's Life, vol. 1, p. 439.

To return, however, from this digression to our immediate subject, the consideration of papers of humour and characteristic delineations. In this class, the following, in addition to those which we have already mentioned, may be selected from the Rambler, as very happy specimens, and as possessing a great share of originality. N° 61, a Londoner's visit to the country; N° 62, a young lady's impatience to see London; N° 73, the lingering expectation of an heir; N° 82, The virtuoso's account of his rarities; N° 107, Properantia's hopes of a year of confusion; Nos. 113, and 115, Hymenæus's history of his courtship; N° 117, the advantages of living in a garret; N° 123, the young trader turned gentleman; N° 157, the bashful scholar; N° 161, the revolutions of a garret; N° 177, the club of antiquaries; N° 179, the awkward merriment of a student; N° 182, Leviculus the fortune-hunter; N° 191, busy life of a young lady; N° 192, love unsuccessful without riches; N° 194, a young nobleman's progress in politeness; N° 195, a young nobleman's introduction to the knowledge of the town; Nos. 197 and 198, the legacy-hunter; N° 200, Asper's complaint of the insolence of Prospero.

Of these papers, Nos. 117 and 161, on the advantages and revolutions of a garret, may be

distinguished for a vein of peculiar humour and pleasantry. The *Bashful Scholar* has given origin to Hawkesworth's admirable Adventurer on the Distresses of an Author invited to read his play,* and to Repton's essay, in his collection intituled "Variety," on the Distresses of a modest Man.†

From the numbers which Johnson contributed to the Adventurer, three may be chosen, of which vivacity and delicate irony are the prominent features; these are N° 74, an apology for neglecting officious advice; N° 84, a journey in a stage coach; and N° 102, on the infelicities of retirement to men of business. The journey in N° 84 has been honoured with several imitations, but not one has equalled the exquisite satire of the original.

It is in the *Idler*, however, that our author has exhibited to the greatest extent his talents for dry and sarcastic humour; his sketches of character too are more numerous, considering the size of the work, than in his Rambler, and it displays, likewise, a greater variety, and a more intimate knowledge of real life. Of the papers which fall distinctly under the class of which we are treating, the following appear to be the most entitled to notice. N° 5, a proposal for a female army; N° 6, a lady's performance on horseback; this

* No. 52. † No. 22.

was an actual achievement, a young lady having engaged to ride a thousand miles in a thousand hours in six weeks; she completed the exploit, however, in less than a month. "At her coming in, the country people strewed flowers in her way, and made great rejoicings on the occasion."* N° 8, plan of military discipline; N° 10, political credulity; N° 16, Drugget's retirement, a paper of exquisite humour; N° 19, character of Jack Whirler; N° 21, character of Dick Linger; N° 28, the wedding-day; N° 31, character of Sober; this sketch, as we have already observed, was intended by the author as a delineation of himself. Johnson was constitutionally idle, nor was he roused to any great effort, but by the imperious call of necessity; his exertions, indeed, when sufficiently stimulated, were gigantic, but they were infrequent and uncertain. He was destined to complain of the miseries of idleness, and to mitigate his remorse by repeated but too often ineffectual resolutions of industry. The portrait which he has drawn, as it is faithful and divested of flattery, a result not common in autobiography, has a claim to insertion.

"Sober is a man of strong desires and quick imagination, so exactly balanced by the love of ease, that they can seldom stimulate him to any

* London Chronicle, May 6th, 1758.

difficult undertaking; they have, however, so much power, that they will not suffer him to lie quite at rest, and though they do not make him sufficiently useful to others, they make him at least weary of himself.

"Mr. Sober's chief pleasure is conversation; there is no end of his talk or his attention; to speak or to hear is equally pleasing; for he still fancies that he is teaching or learning something, and is free for the time from his own reproaches.

"But there is one time at night when he must go home, that his friends may sleep; and another time in the morning, when all the world agrees to shut out interruption. These are the moments of which poor Sober trembles at the thought. But the misery of these tiresome intervals, he has many means of alleviating. He has persuaded himself that the manual arts are undeservedly overlooked; he has observed in many trades the effects of close thought, and just ratiocination. From speculation he proceeded to practice, and supplied himself with the tools of a carpenter, with which he mended his coal-box very successfully, and which he still continues to employ as he finds occasion.

"He has attempted at other times the crafts of the shoemaker, tinman, plumber, and potter; in all these arts he has failed, and resolves to qualify

himself for them by better information. But his daily amusement is chemistry. He has a small furnace, which he employs in distillation, and which has long been the solace of his life. He draws oils, and waters, and essences, and spirits, which he knows to be of no use; sits and counts the drops as they come from his retort; and forgets that whilst a drop is falling, a moment flies away.

"Poor Sober! I have often teazed him with reproof, and he has often promised reformation; for no man is so much open to conviction as the Idler, but there is none on whom it operates so little. What will be the effect of this paper I know not; perhaps he will read it, and laugh, and light the fire in his furnace; but my hope is, that he will quit his trifles, and betake himself to rational and useful diligence."

To these specimens of character and humour may be added N° 39, the Bracelet, the last paragraph of which contains some very severe political satire and allusions; N° 47, the City-Wit; N° 49, Marvel's Journey, an excellent example of solemn irony; Nos. 60 and 61, Dick Minim the critic; Nos. 62 and 64, Tim Ranger's account of the vanity of riches; N° 71, Dick Shifter's rural excursion; Nos. 78 and 83, the Club; and N° 100, the Good Sort of Woman.

The great, however, the prevailing excellence of the Rambler, depends upon its *moral and religious tendency;* upon the vigour and originality of style and manner with which it inculcates the purest precepts of practical virtue. An entire system of ethics, and many of the most important duties of christianity, may be readily drawn from the pages of this work.

It would be difficult indeed to discover, in our language, any production where the vices and the virtues are depicted with equal eloquence, with equal distinctness and force of colouring. The workings of the human heart, the principles which usually influence the mind of man, were, to a great degree, laid bare to the comprehensive intellect of Johnson. Few, like him, have been able to detect the various disguises which guilt assumes, in order to conceal, not only from the view of others, but from itself, its own turpitude and horror; and few, if any, like him, have clothed in such pointed, nervous, and splendid diction, the persuasives to mutual forgiveness, to active benevolence, and unostentatious piety.

The natural bias of our author's mind, and the privations to which he had been subjected for the greater portion of his life, almost unavoidably inclined him to dwell upon the serious and even awful circumstances of existence. This has given

a severer and more didactic tone to his essays than will be found in any other periodical work, and at first indeed considerably checked its popularity; a feature of which he was very sensible, and to which he has himself alluded in the concluding essay of the Rambler. "As it has been my principal design," he remarks, "to inculcate wisdom or piety, I have allotted few papers to the idle sports of imagination. Some, perhaps, may be found, of which the highest excellence is harmless merriment; but scarcely any man is so steadily serious as not to complain, that the severity of dictatorial instruction has been too seldom relieved, and that he is driven by the sternness of the Rambler's philosophy to more cheerful and airy companions."

A more weighty, however, and to a certain extent, a well-founded charge, has been brought against the Rambler, for representing human life under a more gloomy and melancholy aspect than the real state of our existence can warrant. Of this tendency he was himself so much aware, that in N° 109 he has ridiculed with good-humoured pleasantry his own desponding cast of temper.

This clouded view of life, and the consequent exaggeration of its infelicities, arose, in a great measure, from that morbid melancholy, which, as we have already related, very early broke in upon

the happiness which he might otherwise have enjoyed. Solitude, poverty, and neglect contributed, likewise, to aggravate the defect of constitution, and both gave origin to the following gloomy creed: "that life is miserable we all feel—to hope happiness and immortality is equally vain. Our state may, indeed, be more or less embittered, as our duration may be more or less contracted: yet *the utmost felicity which we can ever attain, will be little better than alleviation of misery*, and we shall always feel more pain from our wants than pleasure from our enjoyments."*

To the passage distinguished by italics in this quotation, there are few, I trust, who can give credit; for, though great or long-continued happiness be unattainable in our present state of existence, the comforts and enjoyments of life are surely something more than the mere negation of misery. But Johnson, in fact, instead of painting the sum of good and evil, as it is apportioned to the million, was too often engaged in depicting his own feelings; and those, unhappily for himself, were frequently the result of diseased association. With due allowance, however, for the sombre tinting originating from this source, and which he has generally taken care to alleviate by the consolatory prospects of another and a better

* Rambler, No. 165.

life, his essays on the obligations of morality and religion are above all praise; nor will the self-gratulation, with which he pathetically closes his arduous undertaking, be deemed by any friend to virtue in the smallest degree irrelevant or unmerited. "The essays professedly serious, if I have been able to execute my own intentions," he observes, "will be found exactly conformable to the precepts of christianity, without any accommodation to the licentiousness and levity of the present age. I therefore look back on this part of my work with pleasure, which no blame or praise of man shall diminish or augment. I shall never envy the honours which wit and learning obtain in any other cause, if I can be numbered among the writers, who have given ardour to virtue, and confidence to truth."

Of the various papers which, on the subjects of morality and religion, are interspersed through the Rambler, I shall enumerate those which appear to me the most valuable, and occasionally insert a few extracts and observations; a proceeding that will, more directly than on any other plan, enable the reader to form a just estimate of the mass of useful instruction to be derived from this portion of the labours of our author.

The didactic strain which so remarkably distinguishes this paper commences early; and Nos. 5,

6, 7, and 8, on *Spring*, on the *Non-locality of Happiness*, on *Abstraction* and *Self Examination*, and on the *Regulation of Thought*, present the serious mind with a most favourable specimen of the harvest that awaits it. It must not be omitted, however, that Johnson, who had, by his own confession, no taste for rural beauty, has, in his Meditation on the Spring, affected to consider the fields and woods, at this season of the year, as productive of "almost every thing that our present state makes us capable of enjoying;" and he then adds, "there are men to whom these scenes are able to give no delight, and who hurry away from all the varieties of rural beauty, to lose their hours and divert their thoughts by cards, or assemblies, *a tavern dinner*, or the prattle of the day." Now nothing can be ascertained with greater authenticity, than that our encomiast on the Spring preferred a tavern dinner to all the beauties which the finest season in the finest climate could produce. A deficiency in the perception of picturesque beauty, indeed, seems to have been a constitutional defect with Johnson.

N° 17, on the *Necessity of a frequent Contemplation of Death;* N° 28, on *Self Delusion;* N° 29, on the *Folly of anticipating Misfortunes;* N° 32, on the *Value of Patience;* and N° 47, on the *Regulation of Sorrow;* will, if duly studied, (and

I wish to impress it on my readers, that few ethic productions require more study,) supply to every thinking man the best materials for moral improvement, clothed in the most impressive diction that literature can give.

The subject of N° 48 is on the *Value of a sound Constitution*, and includes a prose version from a Greek fragment of a Hymn to Health. This, though well and accurately performed, yet, as it wants the charm of metrical melody, cannot be said to do perfect justice to the original. I shall therefore venture to introduce a translation of these beautiful lines from the pen of Dr. Beddoes, which are prefixed to his essays intituled Hygëia:

Invocation by Ariphron of Sicyon.

O Thou! among the blissful host
Deserving mortal incense most!
What yet of days remain to me,
Hygeia! let me pass with thee,
And THOU my willing inmate be!
If aught of solace coffer'd hoards—
Whatever progeny affords—
Or sov'reign sway,
Exalting mortals to the Gods above—
Or that sweet prey
Which struggles secret in the snares of love—
To toil-worn man, by Heav'n's behest,
If balms unnam'd refreshment bring—
All owe, benignant Pow'r! to THEE their zest;
Thou giv'st its radiance to the Graces' spring;
Nor but with thee may child of earth be blest.

Our author has likewise, in his essay N° 52, on the contemplation of the calamities of others, as a remedy for grief, given us a prose version of a few lines from Lucretius. As the entire passage, however, is one of the finest in the elaborate work of this great poet, and has been lately very admirably translated by Mr. Good, its insertion in this place will not, probably, be deemed inapposite.

Suave, mari magno turbantibus æquora ventis,
E terrâ magnum alterius spectare laborem:
Non, quia vexari quemquam est joconda voluptas,
Sed, quibus ipse malus careas, quia cernere suave est.
Per campos instructa, tuâ sine parte pericli,
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri:
Sed nihil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere,
Edita doctrinâ sapientum, templa serena;
Despicere unde queas alios, passimque videre
Errare, atque viam palanteis quærere vitæ;
Certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
Nocteis atque dies niti præstante labore
Ad summas emergere opes, rerumque potiri.

Lib. 2.

How sweet to stand, when tempests tear the main,
On the firm cliff, and mark the seaman's toil!
Not that another's danger soothes the soul;
But from such toil how sweet to feel secure!
How sweet, at distance from the strife, to view
Contending hosts, and hear the clash of war!
But sweeter far, on Wisdom's heights serene,
Upheld by Truth, to fix our firm abode;
To watch the giddy crowd that, deep below,

For ever wander in pursuit of bliss;
To mark the strife for honours, and renown,
For wit and wealth, insatiate, ceaseless urg'd,
Day after day, with labour unrestrain'd.
Good's Lucretius, vol. 1, p. 181.

Reverting to the enumeration of the ethic numbers of the Rambler, we shall proceed to remark that N° 50, on the *Respectability of a Virtuous Old Age*; N° 54, on a *Death-bed* as the true school of wisdom; N° 57, on *Frugality;* N° 64, on the *Requisites for Friendship;* N° 68, on *Happiness or Misery*, as chiefly dependent on domestic circumstances; N° 71, on the *Shortness of Life*; N° 72, on *Good Humour*, and N° 77, on the *Wickedness of Immoral Composition*, display, together with great felicity of illustration, force of expression, and keenness of penetration, abundant evidence, not only of a feeling heart, but of a mind peculiarly alive to all the social duties. In the paper on Good Humour, occurs a most striking proof of Johnson's occasional happiness in the adaptation of his imagery; he is contrasting the effect of gaiety and good humour: "It is imagined by many," says he, "that whenever they aspire to please, they are required to be merry, and to shew the gladness of their souls by flights of pleasantry and bursts of laughter. But though these men may be for a time heard with

applause and admiration, they seldom deligl long. We enjoy them a little, and then retii easiness and good humour, *as the eye gazes a on eminences glittering with the sun, but turns aching away to verdure and to flo Gaiety is to good-humour as animal perfum vegetable fragrance; the one overpowers spirits, and the other recreates and revives the*

One of the best written and most impressi the essays of the Rambler is N° 78, on the P *of Novelty*, in which he appears to have ex the full force of his genius. It is in this that the horror of Death, which imbitter many of the hours of Johnson, is depicted in vivid colours than in any other part of his pe cal writings. "Surely," he remarks, "nothin so much disturb the passions or perplex the lects of man, as the disruption of his union wit ble nature; a separation from all that has hit delighted or engaged him; a change not only place, but the manner of his being; an entranc a state not simply which he knows not, but perhaps he has not faculties to know; an i diate and perceptible communication wit supreme Being, and, what is above all distr and alarming, the final sentence, and unalt allotment;" a passage which, in its sentimen tendency, strongly reminds us of the adm

description of Claudio in the Measure for Measure of Shakspeare.

> Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
> To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
> This sensible warm motion to become
> A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
> To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
> In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
> To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
> And blown with restless violence round about
> The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
> Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
> Imagine howling!—'tis too horrible!
> The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
> That age, ach, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature, is a paradise
> To what we fear of death.

Our author seems likewise to have remembered a couplet in the Aureng-Zebe of Dryden,

> Death in itself is nothing; but we fear
> To be we know not what, we know not where.
> Act. 4, Scene 1.

It is in this paper, also, that one of the few pathetic paragraphs which are scattered through the pages of Johnson may be found. Whether considered with regard to its diction or its tender appeal to the heart, it is alike exquisite.

"It is not possible," observes the moralist, "to be regarded with tenderness except by a few:

That merit which gives greatness and renown, diffuses its influence to a wide compass, but acts weakly on every single breast; it is placed at a distance from common spectators, and shines like one of the remote stars, of which the light reaches us, but not the heat. The wit, the hero, the philosopher, whom their tempers or their fortunes have hindered from intimate relations, die, without any other effect than that of adding a new topick to the conversation of the day. They impress none with any fresh conviction of the fragility of our nature, because none had any particular interest in their lives, or was united to them by a reciprocation of benefits and endearments.

"Thus it often happens, that those who in their lives were applauded and admired, are laid at last in the ground without the common honour of a stone; because by those excellencies with which many were delighted, none had been obliged, and though they had many to celebrate, they had none to love them."

N° 87, on the *Causes of the General Inefficiency of giving Advice;* N° 110, on *Penitence and the Placability of the Divine Nature;* N° 114, on proportioning *Punishments to Crimes;* N° 134, on the *Misery of Idleness;* and N° 137, on the *Necessity of a Knowledge of Common Life to Men*

of Learning; convey the justest precepts and monitions in language which has imparted to them an air of uncommon originality. Such, indeed, are the weight, the power of conviction, and the brilliancy, arising from the composition and arrangement of our essayist, that the reader no longer recollects what had faintly impressed him in the diction of his fathers, but attributes to the pointed sentences of the eloquent moralist the palm of discovery.

In the essay on the utility to men of literature of an acquaintance with the daily pursuits of mankind, there occurs a passage of such peculiar excellence, and which so strikingly evinces Johnson's intimacy with human nature, that I am irresistibly tempted to detach it for the benefit of those who may honour these pages with a perusal.

"It may be necessary to consider," he remarks, "that though admiration is excited by abstruse researches and remote discoveries, yet pleasure is not given, nor affection conciliated, but by softer accomplishments, and qualities more easily communicable to those about us. He that can only converse upon questions, about which only a small part of mankind has knowledge sufficient to make them curious, must lose his days in unsocial silence, and live in the crowd of life without

a companion. He that can only be useful on great occasions, may die without exerting his abilities, and stand a helpless spectator of a thousand vexations which fret away happiness, and which nothing is required to remove but a little dexterity of conduct and readiness of expedients.

"No degree of knowledge attainable by man is able to set him above the want of hourly assistance, or to extinguish the desire of fond endearments and tender officiousness; and therefore, no one should think it unnecessary to learn those arts by which friendship may be gained. Kindness is preserved by a constant reciprocation of benefits or interchange of pleasures; but such benefits only can be bestowed, as others are capable to receive, and such pleasures only imparted, as others are qualified to enjoy."

To the moral essays in the Rambler which we have already enumerated, may be added N° 148, on *Parental Cruelty;* N° 149, on *Benefits not being always entitled to Gratitude;* N° 155, on the *Utility of Advice*, on the *Danger of Habits*, and on the *Necessity of Reviewing Life;* N° 167, on the *Requisites to Happiness in the Marriage State;* and N° 203, on the *Consolations of Futurity.*

Of these, N° 155 and N° 203 appear to me peculiarly excellent, and their repeated study as

likely to be attended with the most beneficial effects. In the former, the danger arising from the indulgence of indolence is strongly delineated; and in the latter, the necessity of a hope beyond this world inculcated with irresistible argument.

The contributions of our author to the ADVENTURER, on topicks of a moral and ethic tendency, are not numerous. They are, however, in value not inferior to those which render the Rambler so instructive. The story of *Misargyrus* in Nos. 34 and 41, unfolds in a vivid and interesting manner the folly of extravagance; N°. 69, on *Idle Hope* is a paper of great merit. In N°. 99, on *Projectors*, and on the absurdity of judging of actions by the event, occurs the following passage:

"The last royal PROJECTORS with whom the world has been troubled, were CHARLES of SWEDEN and the CZAR of MUSCOVY. CHARLES, if any judgment may be formed of his designs by his measures and his enquiries, had purposed first to dethrone the CZAR, then to lead his army through pathless desarts into China, thence to make his way by the sword through the whole circuit of Asia, and by the conquest of Turkey to unite Sweden with his new dominions: but this mighty PROJECT was crushed at Pultowa; and CHARLES has since been considered as a madman by those powers, who sent their ambassadors to solicit his

friendship, and their generals to learn under him the art of war."

The present age has been doomed to witness the too successful ambition of another royal Projector, whose plans are still in progression, and who appears destined to unite under one monarchy the continents of Europe and Asia. As daring and enterprising as Charles, as crafty and politic as the CZAR, and more void of principle than either, he combines the greatest military talents with the wary foresight and prospective cunning of the legislator. The only obstacle indeed to the complete subjugation and consequent slavery of the civilized world, is the gallant and spirited resistance of these islands, the sole remaining seat of rational liberty, and whose maritime power is now so vast and extended, as to thwart the views of the Tyrant, to whatever quarter of the globe they are directed.*

* Since this paragraph was written, Spain, awaking from the torpor of ages, has burst the chains which the Gallic Despot had vainly hoped to rivet on her neck; and once more assuming that high chivalric character, which so proudly marked her days of heroism, seems prepared to hurl ruin on the head of her unprincipled invader, and to snatch the continent from destruction.

It is scarcely possible on such a subject to confine the pen within the sober limits of prose; the reader, therefore,

There are but three papers more in the Adventurer on moral subjects, which we shall notice in this place; N° 111, on the *Pleasures and Advantages of Industry;* N° 120, on the *Miseries of Life*; and N° 130, on the *Happiness and Misery of Writers.* The second of these essays is charged with the same *dolorous declamation* which too frequently casts a gloom over the pages of the Rambler; the following paragraph, though it contain some truth, is a most tremendous libel on the condition of humanity. "The world, *in its best state,* is nothing more than a larger assembly of beings, combining to counterfeit happiness which they do not feel, employing every art and contrivance to embellish life, and to hide their real condition from the eyes of one another."

will, I trust, pardon me the intrusion of a single stanza, he birth and exultation of the moment.

Who is he, rising 'mid the thunder of the storm,
Rejoicing in the greatness of his might?
It is Liberty!—he, majestic in his form,
He, glorying in the plenitude of light:
Gigantic is his step, resistless is his course,
Yea, matchless are the workings of his hands!
Hark! thy people shout, Iberia, with tremendous force
Thy armed nations shout along the lands:
They bless thy presence, Liberty!—

uly 28, 1808.

Though the general tone of the IDLER be much more gay and sportive than any other portion of our author's works, it occasionally presents us with papers which in ethic and moral excellence need not shrink from a comparison with the more extended essays of the Rambler. Of these, N° 32, on *Sleep*; N° 41, on the *Death of a Friend*; N° 43, on the *Flight of Time*; N° 51, on the *Impossibility of Attaining Domestic Greatness*; N° 75, the Story of *Gelaleddin of Bassora*; N° 89, on *Physical Evil as Productive of Moral Good*; and N° 103, on the *Horror of the Last*, deserve selection for their depth of thought and utility of precept. Than N° 103, which closes the Idler, I know not, in the range of periodical composition, a more impressive paper; it is impossible to read the passage I am about to quote, without feeling emotions at once strongly pathetic and awfully serious.

"There are few things not purely evil," says the moralist, "of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, *this is the last.* Those who never could agree together shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart; and the *Idler*, with all his chillness of tranquillity, is not

wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is now before him.

"This secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole; the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination; when we have done any thing for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more is past there is less remaining.

"It is very happily and kindly provided, that in every life there are certain pauses and interruptions, which force consideration upon the careless, and seriousness upon the light; points of time where one course of action ends and another begins: and by vicissitude of fortune, or alteration of employment, by change of place, or loss of friendship, we are forced to say of something, *this is the last.*"

Very shortly after the commencement of the Rambler, Johnson was unconsciously implicated in one of the most extraordinary literary impostures that the public ever witnessed. William Lauder, a Scotchman, a teacher of Latin, and a man of considerable ingenuity, attempted in the year 1747, through the mean of various commu-

nications in the Gentleman's Magazine, to fix upon Milton the charge of extensive plagiarism from several modern but obscure latin poets. In order to carry this plan into execution, he had the shameless audacity to interpolate the passages which he extracted from these writers with entire lines, either translated by himself from the Paradise Lost, or literally taken from Hog's Version of that poem. That he might the better escape detection, he had with due foresight fixed upon some of the least known of the continental poets, concluding that from the pages of *Masenius*, *Staphorstius*, *Valmarana*, *Catsius*, and *Taubmannus*, he might purloin, without danger, all that was necessary for his design.

What was the motive which could induce him to make this malevolent attack upon the fame of Milton is not yet satisfactorily ascertained. He has himself, at different times, assigned different reasons; at first, he declared that having edited an edition of Arthur Johnston's Latin Psalms, from the sale of which he had flattered himself with an annual income, his hopes had been completely blasted by the following couplet of Pope, who speaking of Benson in his Dunciad, exclaims

> On two unequal crutches propp'd he came,
> Milton's on this—*on that one Johnston's name.*

This contemptuous mention of poor Arthur, as contrasted with our great national poet, condemned, as Lauder affirms, his edition to the shelf, and excited in him an abhorrence of Milton; when in fact, his resentment, though in any view without rational motive, would have been more naturally directed against Pope. "I had no particular pleasure," he says, "in subverting the reputation of Milton, which I had myself once endeavoured to exalt, and of which the foundation had always remained untouched by me, had not my credit and my interest been blasted, or thought to be blasted, by the shade which it cast from its boundless elevation." He afterwards, however, chose to assert that his enmity to Milton was occasioned by the discovery, on his part, that the prayer of Pamela in Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, was inserted by our great poet in an edition of the Eikon Basilike, with an express view of fixing a charge of impiety on the memory of Charles the First. The true cause of this infamous attack, however, may be attributed to a design which Lauder had embraced, and indeed subsequently carried into execution, of publishing an edition of these almost forgotten Latin Poets; and in order to excite the curiosity of the public for their re-appearance, he had recourse to the un-

principled line of conduct which we have been relating.

For a time he had reason to suppose that the attempt would prove successful, and that the reputation of Milton would be permanently injured; emboldened by this idea, he had the temerity in 1750 to re-publish his papers, with additions, in the form of a pamphlet, and under the title of "An Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns, in his Paradise Lost, 8vo." To this work Johnson was, unhappily, induced to contribute a Preface and a Postscript!

Detection and punishment speedily overtook the miserable Lauder. The very year in which he commenced his atrocious efforts produced a defence of the injured poet from the pen of Mr. Richardson, of Clare Hall, entituled Zoilomastix, or, a Vindication of Milton; but the total discomfiture of the virulent impostor was reserved for Dr. Douglas, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, who, towards the close of the year 1750, published a letter addressed to the Earl of Bath, and entituled "Milton vindicated from the charge of plagiarism brought against him by Mr. Lauder." In this very able pamphlet, after fully disclosing many of the forgeries of Lauder, he thus very candidly adverts to the author of the Preface and Postscript. "It is to be hoped, (he observes,) nay

it is to be expected, that the elegant and nervous writer, whose judicious sentiments and inimitable style point out the author of Lauder's preface and postscript, will no longer allow one to plume himself with his feathers, who appeareth so little to have deserved his assistance; an assistance which, I am persuaded, would never have been communicated had there been the least suspicion of those facts, which I have been the instrument of conveying to the world."

Johnson, indeed, no sooner discovered the iniquity of the man whom he had espoused, and the imposition which had been practised on himself, than he immediately compelled the reluctant Lauder to publish an ample confession of his guilt, which he took care to draw up for him, and in which he is represented as suing, with apparent contrition, for the pardon of his offences; it is entituled "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Douglas, occasioned by his Vindication of Milton, by William Lauder, M. A. 4to, 1751," and would, from its tone of humiliation, have, no doubt, obtained for its object the forgiveness of the public, had not the subsequent conduct of Lauder been such as completely to prove his want of sincerity, and his total dereliction of all moral principle. Scarcely had he yielded to the wishes of Johnson, in publishing his expiatory letter, when he ad-

dressed an apology to the Archbishop of Canterbury, soliciting his patronage for an edition of the very poets whose works he had so grossly misapplied, and concluding it with the following reprehensible paragraph: "As for the interpolations," he remarks, "(for which I am so highly blamed,) when passion is subsided, and the minds of men can patiently attend to truth, I promise amply to replace them, with passages equivalent in value, that are genuine, that the public may be convinced that it was rather passion and resentment, than a penury of evidence, the twentieth part of which has not as yet been produced, that obliged me to make use of them." Nor did he pause here; in 1752 he printed the first volume of the edition of the Latin Poets, and in 1753, a second; these he accompanied with notes, written both in English and Latin, and in a style of such malignant asperity as almost to convict their author of actual derangement; he terms Milton an *arch-felon*, and he introduces an epigram for the purpose of proving the poet to have been an *atheist*. The fictitious contrition and the extreme baseness of this accuser of Milton were not, however, fully developed until 1754, when he brought forward a pamphlet entituled "King Charles vindicated from the charge of plagiarism, brought against him by Milton, and Milton himself convicted of

forgery and a gross imposition on the public," in which he threatens to resume his former attack, and to "reinforce the charge of plagiarism against the English poet, and to fix it upon him, by irrefragable conviction, in the face of the whole world."

By bringing forward this charge against Milton, which we need not say is without the smallest evidence or probability, he was in hopes of ingratiating himself with the zealots of the royalist party; but such was the infamy now attached to the character of Lauder, that even had the story been specious, the medium through which it had passed would alone have condemned it to neglect; accompanied, however, as it was with the most glaring marks of falsehood, and with an utter contempt of all decency, the detestation of the public became so strongly marked, that he was obliged to quit his country, and to seek a refuge in the island of Barbadoes, where, after fruitlessly endeavouring to establish a school, he perished miserably poor, and the object of universal abhorrence.

The connection of Johnson with this violent and fraudulent character, the most unfortunate occurrence of his life, has given rise to much variety of opinion, to much severe accusation, and to some candid exculpations.

That the great moralist had imbibed many prejudices against Milton, and that these originated in, and were fostered by, the warmth of party zeal, cannot, by any impartial person, be denied. It must also be conceded, that this strong aversion to the politics of Milton made him unwilling to do justice to his poetical powers, without a species of qualification that nearly rendered nugatory his previous applause: and even occasioned him to view the supposed discovery of what might lower the author of Paradise Lost in the public estimation, with some degree of complacency.

Beyond this step, I think, we are not warranted to proceed in the charge. No man than Johnson was a greater lover of truth, or more detested any approach to imposition; and his conduct, on the detection of Lauder, was such as fully evinced his utter abhorrence of the attempt. All that could be done to appease the manes of injured genius, he instantly performed, so far at least as the design of Lauder had a tendency to depreciate his moral and poetical worth; for I am sorry to say, as we shall hereafter perceive, that his dislike of Milton the politician was so inveterate, as never to leave his mind open to an unprejudiced discussion of his talents as a poet.

Three very different opinions on the scope and

intentions of our author in this temporary connection with Lauder, have within these few years been given to the world by Biographers of considerable celebrity. Mr. Boswell has declared that his friend was actuated by no other motives than an ardent curiosity and a love of truth, both which were gratified by the investigation which Lauder commenced.* Mr. Hayley, on the contrary, conceives, that, owing to his strong political bias, he had long entertained a species of malevolence towards the principles and even the talents of Milton; "prejudice against Milton in Lauder," he remarks, "arose almost to madness; in Johnson it amounted only to a degree of malevolence, too commonly produced by political disagreement; it had induced him to cherish too eagerly a detractive deception, fabricated to sink an illustrious character, without allowing himself the due exercise of his keen understanding to investigate its falsehood, or to perceive its absurdity;" and further on he has well observed, that, "it should afford us an antidote against the poison of party rage in all literary discussions, to observe, that by indulging it, a very strong and a very devout mind was hurried into the want of clear moral perception, and of true christian charity, in describing the conduct, and in scruti-

* Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 199.

nizing the motives, of Milton. It seems as if the good angel of this extraordinary poet had determined that his poetical renown should pass (like his virtue and his genius) through trials most wonderfully adapted to give it lustre; and hence (as imagination at least may please itself in supposing) might such enemies be combined against him, as the world, perhaps, never saw before in a similar confederacy. A base artificer of falsehood, and a magnanimous teacher of moral philosophy, united in a wild endeavour to diminish his reputation; but, like the rash assailants of Jupiter, in the fables of paganism, they only confirmed the pre-eminence they attacked with preposterous temerity. The philosopher, indeed, made an honourable retreat; and no candid mind will severely censure him for an ill-starred alliance, which, however clouded by prejudice, he might originally form in compassion to indigence, and which he certainly ended by rejection of imposture." *

Severity of censure for this ill-starred alliance has, however, been very lately bestowed upon Johnson by a biographer of great learning and acumen; but in terms, I think, much too strong for the occasion, and unwarranted by the argu-

* Life of Milton, 4to edition, p. 238, 242, 243.

ments brought forward to substantiate the accusation. When Dr. Symmons charges Johnson with "a notable and hardy contempt of truth;" when he asserts that he "survived the *disgrace* of his *infamous* alliance to *enjoy* the opportunity of attempting, with *much deeper*, though not more effectual wounds, the impassible reputation of Milton;" and concludes with declaring that "the delinquency of the *libellous* biographer is ill compensated by the merit of the monotonous and heavy-gaited morality of the sombre and dogmatic essayist;"† he must be allowed, by every impartial reader, to have fallen into the very error which he had repeatedly reprobated in another, and to have adopted, with regard to the departed moralist, the language of prejudice and aversion.

No man indeed will or can succeed in attempting to fix upon the memory of Johnson the adoption of the arts of fraud and falsehood; for, to repeat the expression of his accuser, he will for ever remain impassible to efforts such as these. There is one part, however, of Dr. Symmons's observations on the conduct of Johnson towards Milton, which exhibits not only much acuteness of reasoning, but also some probability. In April

† Life of Milton, 8vo, p. 559, 560, 566.

1750, Johnson wrote a prologue, which was spoken by Garrick at Drury Lane Theatre, on the representation of the Masque of Comus, for the benefit of Mrs. Foster, Milton's grand-daughter. He had entertained the idea of mitigating the poverty of this descendant of the poet when he wrote his postscript in Lauder's book, and recommended a subscription for the purpose; and on the day preceding the performance of Comus, he inserted a letter in the General Advertizer, dated April 4th, strongly recommending the public to honour the illustrious dead by relieving the necessities of his last relative. This charitable interference, together with the occasional encomia of the critic on the poetry of Milton, induced Mr. Boswell and Mr. Murphy to suppose that it was impossible Johnson could be inimical to the poet, the latter observing that "the man, who had thus exerted himself to serve the grand-daughter, cannot be supposed to have entertained personal malice to the grand-father." In answer to this inference Dr. Symmons replies; "I must be forgiven if I remark that this offer of vindication is both irrelevant and defective;—irrelevant, as benevolence to the living, allowing it to be unalloyed with any base mixture of ostentation or interest, may unite, in perfect consistency, with enmity to the dead:—defective, as

the praise, to which the appeal has been so confidently made, is evidently penurious, reluctant, compelled by the demand of the critic's own character, and uniformly dashed and qualified with something of an opposite nature:

——————— medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid quod in ipsis floribus angat.

"While he was depreciating the fame of the illustrious ancestor, Johnson could not act more prudently, or in a way more likely to lead him to his final object, than by acquiring easy credit as the friend of the distressed grandchild; and the prologue which he wrote for her benefit, and which is little more than a versification of what he had before attached to the pamphlet sullied with Lauder's malignity and forgeries, has fully answered the writer's purposes by the imputed liberality which it has obtained for him, and the means with which it has thus supplied him of striking, during the repose of suspicion, the more pernicious blow. Avowed hostility generally defeats its own object; and the semblance of kindness has commonly been assumed by the efficient assassin for the perpetration of his design. Whether, in short, in the instance before us, Johnson indulged, as his friends would persuade us to believe, the charitable propensities of his own heart, or availed himself of the opportunity to

provide for the interests of his own character, the measure may be allowed to have been good, or to have been wise, but cannot be admitted, in opposition to the testimony of formidable facts, to have been demonstrative of his favourable disposition towards Milton." *

Though some expressions in this extract require a little softening, the argument must be allowed to be cogent; Johnson certainly disliked the character of Milton, and was probably not averse to witness a diminution of his reputation; but, from the tenor of his life and writings, nothing can induce me to believe that he would for a moment submit to, or connive at, imposition or falsehood, for the purpose of obtaining such a result.

The year 1752 saw Johnson overwhelmed with the most oppressive affliction; scarcely had he closed the pages of the Rambler, the last number of which is dated March the 14th, when he lost his wife, who expired on the 17th of that month, after an union of seventeen years.* She

* Life of Milton, p. 560, 561, 562.

*There is a strange contradiction, not only in the biographers, but in Johnson himself, with regard to the day of her death. Sir John Hawkins places her decease on the 28th of March; Mr. Boswell on the 17th; Mr. Murphy on the 28th, and Dr. Anderson on the 17th. Johnson in his

was deposited in the church of Bromley, in Kent. The attachment of Johnson to his wife was sincere and ardent, and was cherished to the last moment of his existence with unabated tenderness. He preserved her wedding-ring as long as he lived, enclosed in a small wooden box, within which was pasted the following inscription:

Eheu!
Eliz. Johnson,
Nupta Jul. 9° 1736,
Mortua, eheu!
Mart. 17° 1752.

His prayers and meditations also, which we shall afterwards have occasion to notice, bear a strong and singular testimony to the durability and warmth of his affection.

To mitigate the poignancy of his grief, and dispel the tedium of solitude, he now took into his house, which was in Gough-Square, a Mrs. Anne Williams, who had been the intimate friend of his wife. She was the daughter of Dr. Zachary Williams, a physician in South Wales, and, though blind, had uncommon talents, and great powers of conversation. To this lady, though by no means possessed of a good temper, Johnson was,

prayers commemorates her death on the 28th, and in the inscription on her wedding-ring mentions the 17th as the period of that event!

uniformly kind and attentive. She published by subscription, in 1766, a quarto volume of Miscellanies, to which her patron contributed a few pieces of considerable value.

It was at this period too, that, deprived of his customary domestic gratifications, he began to extend the circle of his acquaintance, and not only to mix more in society abroad, but to receive more frequently at his own house those with whom he had formerly associated. Among the friends who were, at the death of his wife, the consolers of his distress, it may be satisfactory to mention the names of Dr. Bathurst, Dr. Taylor, Dr. Hawkesworth, Mr. Cave, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Macauley; Mr. Millar, Mr. Dodsley, Mr. Bouquet, Mr. Payne, booksellers; Mr. Strahan the printer; the Earl of Orrery, Lord Southwell, Mr. Garrick, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Bennet Langton, Esq. and Mr. Topham Beauclerck; who all, there is every reason to believe, held the author of the Rambler in the highest veneration, as well for the goodness of his heart, as the extraordinary powers of his intellect.

The well-earned fame of Johnson, however, did not attain its greatest altitude until the year 1755; when he appeared to the expecting world, by the publication of his *Dictionary of the English Language*, in the character of a LEXICOGRA-

PHER. His announcement of this important undertaking had taken place so early as 1747, in which year he printed his Prospectus, entituled, "The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language, addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State." It is probable that he had, for some years previous to the date of this pamphlet, meditated on the utility, and mode of construction, of an English Dictionary, as he told Mr. Boswell that the idea "had grown up in his mind insensibly." As soon, however, as he proposed seriously engaging in the arduous task, he met with liberal patronage among the booksellers of the metropolis; seven of whom, namely, Mr. Robert Dodsley, Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two Messieurs Knapton, agreed to remunerate him for his labours with the sum of fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds, a reward which, though at that time justly considered ample and munificent, would now be deemed totally inadequate to the time and effort necessarily required for such a work.

By what means he was induced to address his "Plan" to Lord Chesterfield, he himself confidentially communicated to Mr. Boswell. "Sir," said he, "the way in which the Plan of my

Dictionary came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend Dr. Bathurst, 'Now if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy, when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness."* The manuscript was communicated to his Lordship through the hands of Mr. Whitehead, afterwards Poet Laureat.

The Plan thus addressed to the supposed Mæcenas of the age, is written with peculiar perspicuity both of style and method, and delivers a very distinct relation of what its author hoped to execute; "a dictionary by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration lengthened. And though, perhaps," he continues, "to correct the language of nations by books of grammar, and amend their manners by discourses of morality, may be tasks equally difficult; yet, as it is unavoidable to wish, it is natural likewise to hope, that your Lordship's patronage

* Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 155.

may not be wholly lost; that it may contribute to the preservation of ancient, and the improvement of modern writers; that it may promote the reformation of those translators, who, for want of understanding the characteristical difference of tongues, have formed a chaotic dialect of heterogeneous phrases; and awaken to the care of purer diction some men of genius, whose attention to argument makes them negligent of style, or whose rapid imagination, like the *Peruvian* torrents, when it brings down gold, mingles it with sand." *

The patronage of Lord Chesterfield was soon discovered by Johnson to be nothing more than a mere name. No two characters, indeed, could be more opposed, and it was not probable, therefore, that they should assimilate either in matter or manner. Void of all exterior accomplishments, the rigid moralist, the retired and uncourtly scholar, was appealing to a man who placed little value upon any thing that was not subservient to elegance of address, to the blandishments of flattery, and the arts of consummate hypocrisy; who inculcated, in his system of education, as a duty, the vices most destructive of domestic peace and happiness, and who thought it unnecessary, in his plan, to advert either to the

* Johnson's Works, Murphy's edition, vol. 2, p. 28, 29.

principles of religion or morality. From such a man, nearly as deficient in literature as he was in virtue, what could genius and learning, truth and piety expect? nothing but what they encountered in the person of Johnson, insincerity and neglect.

The interviews that were obtained shortly after the publication of the "Plan" were productive only of mutual disgust; and Johnson was speedily taught to deplore the mistake which he had made in the choice of a patron, to view his acquirements with contempt, and his principles with abhorrence. He ceased, therefore, to indulge any hopes of support from this quarter, and, gradually prosecuting his laborious task, looked forward solely to the approbation of the public as his best reward.

Seven years had now been consumed in the construction of this vast design; when, towards the close of the year 1754, Lord Chesterfield again made his appearance on the stage, and, with a meanness only equalled by his previous neglect, attempted to soothe the resentment of the Lexicographer, and obtain the honour of a dedication, by printing two essays in the periodical work entituled "The World," in recommendation of his Dictionary, which was, at this period, expected to appear in the course of a few

months. These papers were dated November the 28th, and December the 5th, 1754, and, though written with studied elegance, and in a high strain of compliment, justly excited the indignation of our author, who exclaimed in anger to his friend Garrick, "I have sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language; and does he now send out two cock-boats to tow me into harbour?" Determined that his Lordship should be apprised of what he felt upon this occasion, he addressed to him the following letter, dated February the 7th, 1755; a composition, which for the keenness of its sarcasm, the elegance of its language, and the lofty tone of reprehension which it displays, is, perhaps, unrivalled.

"TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

"My Lord,

"I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of The World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered,

like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached the ground,

encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

"My Lord,

"Your Lordship's most humble,

"Most obedient servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

With this spirited letter the celebrated Dr. Warburton was highly pleased, and requested Dr. Adams to tell Johnson, with his compliments, that he honoured him for his manly conduct. The effect which it produced upon the mind of Chesterfield was undoubtedly great; but he, with his accustomed policy, appeared to treat the mat-

ter with the most perfect indifference, and after reading the letter to Mr. Dodsley, and praising the expression of various passages in it, made no other apology for his scandalous neglect of the author, than that "he had heard he had changed his lodgings, and he did not know where he lived!"

After this open rupture with his Lordship, Johnson no longer forbore publicly to express his opinion of him. In the next edition of his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, the last line of the following couplet,

> Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail,
> Pride, envy, want, the *garret*, and the jail:

was thus altered,

> Pride, envy, want, the *Patron*, and the jail:

and speaking of him to his friends, "This man," would he say, "I thought had been a Lord among wits, but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords!" Whatever severity there may be in this observation, the opinion which he pronounced upon the Letters of this nobleman to his son, is, I am sorry to say, perfectly correct, "they teach," said he, "the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing-master."

In August 1754, Johnson visited Oxford, for the express purpose of examining the libraries of that university; and in November of the same

year he was induced, with the advice and assistance of his friends Mr. Thomas Warton, and Mr. Wise, Radclivian Librarian, to solicit from the University the degree of Master of Arts, an honour which was deemed of essential consequence, as it would carry much weight with it on the title-page of his Dictionary. The degree, by diploma, was, on the recommendation of the Chancellor, conferred upon him by the University, on the 20th of February, 1755, without a single dissentient voice, and in terms expressive of a high sense of his literature and writings; "cumque vir doctissimus SAMUEL JOHNSON, è Collegio Pembrochiensi, scriptis suis popularium mores informantibus dudum literato orbi innotuerit; quin et linguæ patriæ tum ornandæ tum stabiliendæ (Lexicon scilicet Anglicanum summo studio, summo a se judicio congestum propediem editurus) etiam nunc utilissimam impendat operam; Nos," &c. &c.

This great work was at length published in May, 1755, in two volumes folio, to which were prefixed a Grammar and History of the English Language. Johnson had supposed, when he began his labours on this subject, that three years of regular application would be sufficient for the performance of the task; and he therefore gave the proprietors and the public reason to hope for

its completion on the expiration of that period. In this calculation he was, however, so greatly deceived, that eight years elapsed before his folios were ushered into the world; and one consequence of this delay was, that he had spent all the copy-money, which he had been in the habit of receiving by drafts, and an additional hundred pounds, long previous to the conclusion of his undertaking. The patience of his employers was, therefore, severely tried; and when the last sheet was brought to Mr. Millar, he could not avoid exclaiming, "thank God I have done with him;" a sally which when repeated to Johnson, he replied with a smile, "I am glad that he thanks God for any thing."

What was merely mechanical in the construction of his Dictionary he entrusted to six amanuenses, five of whom were Scotchmen. These he placed in an upper room of his house in Gough-square, which he fitted up conveniently with desks; their employment was to write down the words, which he had chosen, with spaces between them, then to insert as fast as he delivered them in writing, their etymologies, definitions, and various significations, and afterwards to copy the authorities from books, in which he had distinguished the passages selected by the stroke of a black-lead pencil.

The models which Johnson followed in the formation of his work, were the *Vocabulario* of the *Academia della Crusca*, and the *Dictionaire* of the *French Academicians*, both productions of merit and utility, but both the offspring of a number of associated individuals; whereas, with the exception of about twenty etymologies, sent him by Dr. Pearce, the whole stress and burthen of the undertaking fell upon our author; compared with whose gigantic exertions, the labours of the Academicians of France and Italy must be considered as altogether trifling. The disparity gave rise to a very elegant jeu d'esprit from the pen of Garrick, in allusion to the forty members of which the French Academy consisted, and who were all engaged upon their boasted Dictionary; a production, which, though displaying industry and research, did not equal the public expectation.

Talk of war with a Briton, he'll boldly advance,
That one English soldier will beat ten of France:
Would we alter the boast from the sword to the pen,
Our odds are still greater, still greater our men;
In the deep mines of science, though Frenchmen may toil,
Can their strength be compar'd to Locke, Newton, & Boyle?
Let them rally their heroes, send forth all their powers,
Their verse-men and prose-men; then match them with ours;
First Shakspeare and Milton, like gods in the fight,
Have put their whole drama and epic to flight;

In satires, epistles, and odes would they cope,
Their numbers retreat before Dryden and Pope;
And Johnson, well arm'd like a hero of yore,
Has beat *forty* French, and will beat forty more!

That a work of this kind was a great desideratum in our language, must be confessed by all who are acquainted with the low state of English Lexicography previous to its publication. Nothing can more distinctly point out our poverty in this branch of literature, than the few native resources to which Johnson was enabled to apply. The "Glossographia" of Thomas Blount, which was printed in 1656; the "New World of Words," a folio published by Edward Philips, the nephew of Milton, in 1657; and the Dictionary of Nathan Bailey, which has passed through many improved editions, were the only vocabularies of any consequence, devoted solely and immediately to the English language, that had preceded his volumes.

Latin and English Dictionaries, and Polyglots including our language, where the signification of English appellations are occasionally given, were, however, more numerous, and to these he may be supposed to have occasionally referred. Sir Thomas Elyot, Thomas Cooper, John Baret, Philemon Holland, John Rider, Thomas Holyoak, Elisha Cole, Francis Gouldman, Adam Littleton,

and Robert Ainsworth, are the chief authors of these useful compilations, and form a host highly honourable to the classical literature of the island.

To Etymologists and technical Lexicographers our author was necessarily much indebted, and of these we may mention, as his peculiar authorities, the Law Dictionaries of Cowel and Blount, the "Guide" of Minshew, the Saxon Dictionary of Somner, the Glossarium of Spelman, the Glossarium Gothicum, and the Etymologicon Anglicanum of Junius, and the Etymologicon Linguæ Anglicanæ of Skinner.

With this assistance, and the models which we have already mentioned, Johnson produced a vernacular Dictionary, in many points of view superior to any which the world had yet seen. It was received with great and proportionate applause, the circulation at home was large and rapid, nor were testimonies wanting abroad of the high estimation in which the author and his work were held. The Earl of Corke presented it to the Florentine Academy, and the members immediately sent a very fine set of their Vocabulario to Johnson, who received, nearly at the same time, from the French Academy, and through the hands of Mr. Langton, a similar mark of regard, by the transmission of a copy of their Dictionaire.

The Preface with which Johnson has intro-

duced his Dictionary, is the most eloquent production of his pen. In it he has taken a most elaborate and comprehensive view of his subject, and has amply proved, that in theory, at least, if not in practice, he was acquainted with all the duties of a perfect Lexicographer. The style is uncommonly correct, perspicuous, and strong, and the conclusion forms the most pathetic passage in the works of its author. It is an appeal, indeed, which, as founded on rigid truth, scarcely any human heart, not sered to apathy, can resist; and it contains, likewise, an apology admissible by every candid mind, for what has been since found to be its principal defect, omission.

"In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, (and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceed the faults of that which it condemns,) yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it, that the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our lan-

guage is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt, which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprized in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the *Italian* academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied criticks of France, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its œconomy, and give their second editiqn another form, I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise."

More than half a century has now elapsed since the publication of this great work, which, notwithstanding the defects in its execution that have within these few years been pointed out, and these are certainly numerous, was, at the time of its appearance, a vast and important accession to our literature; an accession which

has not yet been paralleled. Before the Lexicon of Johnson was printed, no Dictionary to which the epithet *classical* could be affixed, had arisen in this country; our language was loose and disarranged, and, though etymology had been cultivated with success by Bailey, we had no authorities or definitions for our words. These, although many exceptions may be selected, constitute the chief excellence of our author's philological labours, and still render his book a work of most useful reference; whilst a deficiency in the philosophy of grammar and language, and in the knowledge of the Teutonic dialects, together with much ignorance of old English literature, are his prominent faults. It may be said, indeed, in mitigation, that the first of these defects was the fault rather of the age than of the individual, and that, with few exceptions, nothing of much value on the subject was published before the *Epea Pteroenta* of Horne Tooke; with regard to the second, the study of the Gothic tongue and its sister idioms had, at that time, been little cultivated in England, nor was its utility in the illustration of our language become so apparent as in the present day; and as to the importance of *black letter* reading, it must be confessed that until within these thirty years, few were acquainted with the riches that it held in store.

"It would have been a matter of national advantage," observes Mr. Headly, "had Johnson, after an attentive perusal of the poets of this age, distinguished in his Dictionary those particular obsolete words which, from their sound and significance, merit use and adoption; the sanction of his authority might have gone far towards restoring them to that rank, both in writing and conversation, which they have too long undeservedly forfeited: but, by the contracted list of authors his quotations are drawn from, it is evident he neglected dirtying himself in the dust of the *Black Letter*; a task, which, however uninviting, was indispensably requisite to the completion of his plan; and *without which, no man can clearly survey the foundations of our language.*"*

For near thirty years, however, the censure which the Lexicon of Johnson had to encounter was trifling; the ridicule of Wilkes, the threats of Kenrick, the "Lexiphanes" of Campbell, and the "Deformities of Johnson" by Callender, though they might excite a smile at the expence of our author, were too imbecile to make any impression on the fabric which they meant to injure.

* Introduction to his "Select Beauties of Ancient English Poetry," p. 18.

It appears, indeed, to be admitted by all who have devoted themselves to English philology, that, however numerous may be the omissions of Johnson, the excellence of the plan, and in part of the execution, remain undisputed; and even the defects have indirectly been of essential service to the cause of literature, by stimulating the exertions and emulation of others. Since the era of the publication of this classical Vocabulary, the attention of the British literati has been peculiarly fixed on the cultivation and systematic improvement of our language, and its structure and its wealth of words are at length much better known and appreciated.

The Dictionaries which, with small intervals, immediately succeeded the work of Johnson, are not of great value. In 1761, appeared Rider's *Universal English Dictionary*, 4to; and in 1773, "*A new Dictionary of the English Language*," by William Kenrick, LL.D. 4to; this is principally directed towards the correction of orthoepy, but his plan is complicated and incorrect. In 1775, was published "*A Dictionary of the English Language, answering at once the purposes of Rhyming, Spelling, and Pronouncing, on a plan not hitherto attempted*," 8vo, by J. Walker. The plan of this production is certainly novel, and, in

the mechanism of rhyme, may prove a work of some utility. In the same year was printed also, *A new and complete Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols. 8vo; by John Ash, LL.D. which, in the mere accumulation of words, is extensive beyond any precedent in this country; it includes *obsolete*, *provincial*, and *cant* words and phrases, besides a multitude of technical terms, and is, therefore, from its copiousness, an useful, and has been a popular compilation; but as a standard of authority it cannot be held in any estimation.

It was not, indeed, until the year 1780, that a Dictionary was published which might be placed on the same shelf with that of Johnson. What the author of the Rambler had done for the orthography of our language, was executed by Mr. Sheridan for its orthoepy; his labours were given to the world in two volumes 4to, and have established the principles and the general rules upon which our pronunciation is founded; an effort attended, perhaps, with more difficulty and hazard of success than accompanies the orthographical department.

In the year 1783, an attempt was made by the Rev. George William Lemon, to furnish the public with an English Derivative Dictionary; in a ponderous quarto, entituled *English Etymology*,

this gentleman endeavours to prove that the foundations and structure of our language are derived solely from the *Greek*. "Let the channel or channels," he says, "for there are undoubtedly many, through which the words of our modern English have been derived to us, be whatever they may, Roman, Gothic, Celtic, Saxon, Teutonic, or Icelandic, still it is the *Greek alone* that is the true basis of the English tongue." A position so unlimited and absurd, very soon consigned the etymologies of Mr. Lemon to oblivion.

During the construction of the Dictionary of Johnson, and of those which we have just enumerated, some light was thrown upon the philosophy of language and grammar by the productions of Harris, of Lowth, and of Monboddo; the *Hermes* of the first in 1752, the *Grammar* of the second in 1762, and the *Origin and Progress of Language* of the third, the first volume of which was published in 1773, certainly contributed in no small degree to the progress of philological learning; but it is, nevertheless, to the exertions of the last twenty-three years, that English Grammar will be indebted for its systematic correctness, its consistency and truth. In Lexicography, indeed, if no work has yet appeared which can boast of any pretensions to supersede the work of Johnson, preparations are rapidly making for such a

production; an event which cannot, in the smallest degree, detract from the just fame of Johnson; all efforts of this kind, in a living language, are necessarily imperfect; and he will still possess the undoubted merit of having, in part, established the foundation on which the fabric is to rest.

Notwithstanding what had been effected by the elaborate Lexicon of Sheridan, the lovers of English Philology were still further gratified in 1784, by the publication of Nares's *Elements of Orthoepy: containing a distinct view of the whole Analogy of the English Language, so far as it relates to Pronunciation, Accent, and Quantity.* 8vo. This is a work of distinguished excellence; the arrangement is systematic and perspicuous; great industry, research, and judgment are exhibited throughout its pages, and it forms, without any controversy, the most useful and complete treatise on the subject.

It is to the Year 1806, however, that we are to look for an entire revolution in the theory of grammar, occasioned by the appearance of the ΕΠΕΑ ΠΤΕΡΟΕΝΤΑ of John Horne Tooke. This production, the first part of which was originally published in octavo, immediately opened a new track to the grammarian and lexicographer, and at once swept away the accumulating rubbish of centuries. It reduced the necessary words of

anguage to two, the *Noun* and the *Verb*, including all the other parts of speech under the title of *abbreviations;* proving that *particles* or *indeclinable* words, are the *signs of other words*, and are traceable to a clear corporeal signification.*

The truth and stability of this doctrine, it is probable, neither time nor research will ever invalidate; and we may assert with a periodical critic of great acumen, "that of all the discoveries of this age, those of our author are most creditable to human sagacity and ingenuity. If he has been proscribed civil distinctions, and if it has been denied to him to become, like Lord Bacon, the head of the law, his name will descend to posterity, as having rendered services to human knowledge, not less brilliant than those of the philosophical chancellor."†

The lexicographic omissions of Johnson, which every day became more apparent, at length led to various attempts in order to supply the hiatus. In 1792, the Rev. Herbert Croft (now Sir Herbert) printed proposals for publishing by subscription, in four volumes folio, "A new edition of Johnson's Dictionary, corrected without the

* A second edition in quarto of this first part was published in 1798, and was followed in 1805 by a second volume; a third, it is supposed, will finish the work.

† Monthly Review, New Series, vol. 51, p. 407.

smallest omission: considerably improved: and enlarged with more than twenty thousand words, illustrated by examples from the books quoted by Dr. Johnson, and from others of the best authority in our own and former times." The subscription for this magnificent work was to be twelve guineas; but as it failed to fill, owing to an idea, I believe, that Mr. Croft was not, at that time, sufficiently acquainted with the northern languages, the design was, for a period at least, relinquished.

It was probably in consequence of this alleged defect, that Mr. Croft, soon after, left England for the Continent, and devoted himself with uncommon ardour to the study of the Low and High German dialects. He became intimate with the best philologers and poets of Germany, and particularly with the celebrated epic bard Klopstock; and in 1797, he printed a quarto pamphlet at Hamburgh, which was likewise sold in London, entituled *A Letter, from Germany, to the Princess Royal of England, on the English and German languages. With a Table of the different Northern Languages, and of different periods of the German: and with an Index.*

In this pamphlet Mr. Croft, after expressing his regret for the failure of his former proposals, has given ample proofs of his intimacy with the Gothic

languages, and of his perfect adequacy to the task which he had formerly undertaken. It is hoped and expected, therefore, that he will proceed in his vast design; nor will the public now withhold its patronage from a scholar, who has given such clear evidence of abilities commensurate with the execution of his plan.

The year which produced this pamphlet gave birth, likewise, at Hamburgh, to a prospectus for a New Dictionary of the French Language. In speaking of this work, the *Discours Preliminaire* of A. C. De Rivarol, the Monthly Reviewer has introduced some very pertinent observations on the deficiencies of the classical Dictionaries of Europe, which, as they immediately coalesce with our subject, and the Lexicon of Johnson is included in the detail, I shall make no hesitation in transcribing.

"Certain it is," he remarks, "that, of the several dictionaries hitherto reputed classical in Europe, not one contains above two thirds of the words freely circulating in the language of which it treats. The *Vocabolario degli Academici della Crusca* is fallen into the yellow leaf, and is become rather a glossary of those declining terms, which give a mellow tint to the immortal poetry and the mortal prose of the Medicean age, than a

collection of the green and living words of fashion and of use.

"The *Dictionnaire de l'Academie Française*, like the epopee of its projector *Chapelain*, is only not sunken into sufficient obscurity to be screened from contempt. A total ignorance of the theory of language and of the art of definition; a servile deference for what its authors mistook for usage, and what was in fact the provincialism of the metropolis; an affection for low traditional phrases; and a pedantic rage for regulating trifles; dishonourably distinguish this boasted pillar of French literature. It has long been superseded by the private work of *Richelet*, which has, in its turn, become too scanty a repository for the multiplying nomenclature of his country.

"The *Dictionary of Dr. Samuel Johnson* should next be mentioned. His predecessor Bailey had displayed a more radical knowledge of etymology. Johnson's ignorance of the philosophy of language was the misfortune of his time, more than the fault of his own negligence: but his loose and pedantic style of definition, his passion for the needless subdivision of meanings, his misarrangement of significations, (so as frequently to place the metaphorical before the proper,) his inelegant taste for neoteric importation, (which was exclusively confined to Latin polysyllables,) his partial

estimate of the value of authorities, and his innumerable omissions, combine to shew the imperfection of all human labour.

"The *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana*, published in 1783 by the Academy of Madrid, has the merit of being drawn up with conciseness and selected with judgment; and, as its definitions are often inserted in Latin, it is very convenient for strangers to the Spanish language. Its neglect of etymology, however, destroys its claim to rank among enterprizes of the higher class. Besides its words of Latin origin, the Spanish contains a multitude of terms of Biscayan and of Arabic derivation; and it is important to the ascertainment of many speculative questions, to be able to discriminate between them:—but these academicians do not teach us to discern which ideas their nation has derived from its primæval inhabitants, which from its Roman, and which from its Moorish conquerors. To Larramenda and Haouy, to Erpenius and Golius, we must still recur for a laborious separation of this mingled oratory into its elemental dialects.

"The *Versuch eines grammatisch-kritischen Wörterbucks* of *Adelung* comes nearer to the idea of a perfect dictionary, than any other effort of individual diligence and modern culture. An acute theory of the origin of speech, which guides

the erudition of his etymological researches to the sensible idea latent in the parent-word of the most abstract and metaphorical ramifications of thought—an historical familiarity with the migrations and shifting civilization of the tribes, whose confluent jargons have supplied the reservoirs of the German tongue—and a comprehensive knowledge of the nature of polished style and of the fine literature of his country—only leave room for the wish, that he had elevated himself yet higher above the prejudices of ceremonious grammarians, and had discussed the whole doctrine of phraseology with the liberal insight of Gregory Sharpe, of Schultens, and of Tooke. His excellent grammar resembles that of our Wallis: but it sternly resists innovation with a frown which the practice of his countrymen has not heeded." *

About four years after the publication of Sir Herbert Croft's Letter from Germany, another attempt was made to supply the deficiencies of Johnson's Dictionary. This, the production of Mr. George Mason, is entituled *A Supplement to Johnson's Dictionary; of which the palpable Errors are attempted to be rectified, and its material omissions supplied. (With a separate Appendix.)* 4to. 1801.

* Monthly Review, vol. xxiv. N. S. p. 559—560.

The list of words which this supplementalist has added to the Lexicon of his predecessor is highly useful and valuable; and it is to be hoped that, in future, his labours will be incorporated with those of his prototype. Even when this is done, however, much will still be wanting to complete the fabric of a perfect Dictionary.

In the mean time, namely, in June 1800, the Rev. Walter Whiter presented the public with a most elaborate and learned volume on etymology, under the title of *Etymologicon Magnum, or Universal Etymological Dictionary, on a new Plan. With Illustrations drawn from various Languages: English, Gothic, Saxon, German, Danish, &c. Greek, Latin,—French, Italian, Spanish,—Gaelic, Irish, Welsh, Bretagne, &c. the Dialects of the Sclavonic; and the Eastern Languages, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Sanscrit, Gypsey, Coptic, &c. &c. Part I, 4to, pp. 570.*

In this very original and ingenious work, which, whatever may become of its theory, will be always highly estimated by the profound etymologist, the author, after stating as his preliminary positions, 1st, that in all questions of etymology the *vowels* are to be entirely omitted or disregarded; and 2d, that certain consonants, which are recognized as cognate, are always to be considered as equivalent or identical; proceeds to include his

entire system in the following concise theorem: "That the same combination of the same or of equivalent consonants have the same virtual and elementary meaning, in all the languages with which we are acquainted."

An introductory discourse of forty pages is devoted to the illustration of the positions, and the body of the work is appropriated to the discussion and proof of the theorem.

Of the abilities of Mr. Whiter, as exhibited in this stupendous undertaking, no scholar can withhold his admiration; but to the truth of his system, notwithstanding the acuteness and erudition brought forth in its support, there are, probably, not many who will subscribe.

A very operose specimen of what may be termed an annotated edition of Johnson's Dictionary, made its appearance in the year 1806. It is the production of Benjamin Dawson, LL.D. who terms it *Philologia Anglica; or, a Philological and Synonymical Dictionary of the English Language; in which the Words are deduced from their Originals, their Sense defined, and the same illustrated and supported by proper Examples and Notes critical and explanatory.* 4to.

The design of this laborious undertaking is, to strike out the superfluities of Johnson, to correct his errors, to amend his definitions, to vary his

examples, and to supply his omissions. The plan of our great lexicographer is minutely followed; but in the number before us such is the multiplicity of notes, that, if in the remainder of the work the author should distribute them with equal profusion, the bulk will be immense, and too unweildy for utility. It should also be remarked, that Dr. Dawson appears more intimate with classical than Teutonic literature; great industry, however, and much research are evinced.

The year 1807 was productive of several attempts to improve and extend the lexicography of our country. Of these I shall mention two; 1st, *A Supplement to Dr. Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language; or a Glossary of obsolete and provincial Words. By the late Rev.* JONATHAN BOUCHER, *A.M. Part the First.* 4to.—2d, *An Introduction to an Analytical Dictionary of the English Language, by* D. BOOTH. 8vo.

The glossary of Mr. Boucher is peculiarly valuable, and it is greatly to be regretted that the worthy author did not live to complete his labours. He had proceeded no farther than to the letter G.

Such are the productions to which the Dictionary of Johnson has given rise; and it is not one of the smallest benefits resulting from the execution of that great work, that it speedily turned the attention of the literary world to the ardent

study and improvement of our language. The plan which our author adopted has been considered unexceptionable; and had he not too implicitly copied the English portion of the Lexicon of Ainsworth, his vocabulary would have been much more copious and complete. As it is, it has been an invaluable gift to his country; and he who shall succeed in approximating nearer to perfection, though he may justly claim the reward of industry, and, perhaps, of more recondite learning, must, if he be candid and grateful, ever refer to the Dictionary of Johnson as the original, the basis of the fabric to which he shall owe his reputation.

The labours of Johnson, notwithstanding he had now produced the Rambler and his Dictionary, were not only insufficient to procure the blessings of competence, but were, in fact, not able to screen him from the pressure of absolute poverty. The year which succeeded the publication of his Lexicon saw him under an arrest for the paltry sum of five pounds eighteen shillings. In this dilemma he applied, by letter, to Richardson the Novellist, who immediately sent him six guineas. To add to his distress, relaxation from mental exertion, which now became absolutely necessary, in order to relieve his powers, wearied by the tension of long and severe employment,

brought with it, in his morbid habit, the customary accompaniment of melancholy and dejection. It was in a frame of mind similar to this that he produced his pathetic effusion in Latin hexameters, entituled,

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΤΤΟΝ,

Post Lexicon Anglicanum auctum et emendatum;

in which he has given a representation so minutely accurate of his own feelings and failings, that probably no one of his numerous biographers, however free from bias, has touched the prominent features of his character with such fidelity, with such a perfect subserviency to truth and impartiality. After mentioning the labours of Scaliger in the composition of his Lexicon, and after extolling his genius and imagination, as exhibited in his various productions, he thus alludes to himself; a passage which I shall give from the spirited version of Mr. Murphy:

For me, though his example strike my view,
Oh! not for me his footsteps to pursue.
Whether first Nature, unpropitious, cold,
This clay compounded in a ruder mould;
Or the slow current, loit'ring at my heart,
No gleam of wit or fancy can impart;
Whate'er the cause, from me no numbers flow,
No visions warm me, and no raptures glow.
A mind like Scaliger's, superior still,
No grief could conquer, no misfortune chill.

Though for the maze of words his native skies
He seem'd to quit, 'twas but again to rise;
To mount once more to the bright source of day,
And view the wonders of th' ætherial way.
The love of fame his gen'rous bosom fir'd;
Each Science hail'd him, and each Muse inspir'd.
For him the Sons of Learning trimm'd the bays,
And nations grew harmonious in his praise.
My task perform'd, and all my labours o'er,
For me what lot has Fortune now in store?
The listless will succeeds, that worst disease,
The rack of indolence, the sluggish ease.
Care grows on care, and o'er my aching brain
Black Melancholy pours her morbid train.
No kind relief, no lenitive at hand,
I seek, at midnight clubs, the social band;
But midnight clubs, where wit with noise conspires,
Where Comus revels, and where wine inspires,
Delight no more: I seek my lonely bed,
And call on Sleep to soothe my languid head:
But sleep from these sad lids flies far away;
I mourn all night, and dread the coming day.
Exhausted, tir'd, I throw my eyes around,
To find some vacant spot on classic ground;
And soon, vain hope! I form a grand design;
Languor succeeds, and all my pow'rs decline.
If Science open not her richest vein,
Without materials all our toil is vain.
A form to rugged stone when Phidias gives,
Beneath his touch a new creation lives.
Remove his marble, and his genius dies;
With nature then no breathing statue vies.

Whate'er I plan, I feel my pow'rs confin'd
By Fortune's frown and penury of mind.
I boast no knowledge glean'd with toil and strife,
That bright reward of a well-acted life.
I view myself, while Reason's feeble light
Shoots a pale glimmer through the gloom of night,
While passions, error, phantoms of the brain,
And vain opinions, fill the dark domain;
A dreary void, where fears with grief combin'd
Waste all within, and desolate the mind.

It was impossible, therefore, for Johnson long to continue idle, unmenaced by the apprehension, which for ever haunted his mind, of approaching insanity. It was essentially necessary to the preservation of his faculties that he should have intellectual employment; and accordingly, if not engaged in any extensive and elaborate design, he was ever ready to favour his friends with Prefaces and Introductions to their respective works, or willing to assist in the construction of Magazines, Reviews, and other periodical publications. Soon after he had printed his Dictionary he wrote, for Zachariah Williams, the father of the blind lady whom he had so kindly taken into his house, *An Account of an attempt to ascertain the Longitude at Sea, by an exact Theory of the Variations of the Magnetical Needle; with a Table of the Variations at the most remarkable Cities in Europe, from the year* 1660 *to* 1860; and as a proof of the versa-

of his talents, it may not be irrelevant to tion, that in the year following he contributed *eliminary Address* to the *Literary Magazine*, *niversal Review*; a *Dedication* and *Preface ayne's Introduction to the Game of Draughts*; an *Introduction* to the *London Chronicle*, an ing newspaper!

the year 1756, also, he published an *Abridge-* of his Dictionary, in two vols. 8vo; several *ys* in the *Universal Visitor*, *or Monthly Me-alist*; six *Original Essays* in the *Literary azine*; and many *Reviews*. It was in this , likewise, that he issued his *Proposals* for an on of Shakspeare, an undertaking of which hall have occasion to say more hereafter.

y the sums arising from these miscellaneous ributions, from the subscriptions for his Shak-re, and from the circulation of his Idler, in , our author contrived to live. He might ed, had he chosen to enter the church, have placed in a state of comparative opulence; ie father of his beloved friend Bennet Langton ed, in 1757, to present him, if he would take rs, to a rectory, in his gift, of considerable e. This mode of provision, however, he de-d from conscientious motives. "I have not," he, "the requisites for the office, and I can-in my conscience, shear that flock which I am

unable to feed." "Upon conversing with him on that inability," relates Sir John Hawkins, "which was his reason for declining the offer, it was found to be a suspicion of his patience to undergo the fatigue of catechizing and instructing a great number of poor ignorant persons, who, in religious matters, had, perhaps, every thing to learn."* In the Adventurer he has given his opinions on this subject at full length, and with his usual ability.†

To the commencement of the year 1759 we have to ascribe an event, which, however afflicting at the time to the feelings of Johnson, was productive of one of the noblest efforts of his pen, and which demands from us the distinct consideration of its author under the character of a NOVELLIST.

In January, at the very advanced age of ninety, he lost his mother, for whom, to the latest moment of her existence, he preserved a reverential affection, unsubdued by time or absence. Though his literary engagements precluded his personal attendance upon her, a circumstance which he ever regretted; yet to his filial piety she was indebted for her sole support; and his motive for the composition of *Rasselas* was, that with the profits of the sale he might discharge his mother's debts, and pay the expences of her funeral.

* Life of Johnson, p. 365. † No. 126.

Promptitude in the execution of his task, therefore, became a duty; and he declared to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that "he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions as it was written, and had never since read it over!" The sum obtained from the sale of this work, thus consecrated to filial affection, amounted to one hundred and twenty-five pounds.

To oriental fiction Johnson was peculiarly partial; and it is probable, that to his translation of Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia in early life we are, in a great measure, indebted for this attachment. He has, moreover, given us various specimens of his skill in the difficult departments of Vision and Allegory; and his papers of this kind are, with the exception of the inimitable Mirza of the Spectator, inferior to none which have been produced by his predecessors in periodical literature. His first, however, and probably one of his best, attempts in the realms of fancy, was published in the *Preceptor* of Dodsley in 1748, under the title of "The Vision of Theodore the Hermit of Teneriffe, found in his cell." This very interesting allegory, of which its author's opinion was so high, that he declared to the Bishop of Dromore that he considered it as the best thing he ever wrote, paints in very vivid colours the condition and vicissitudes of mortality, and represents, under

the well conceived fiction of the ascent of the Mountain of Existence, the effects of education and religion, of the appetites, passions, and habits, on the mind and frame of man.

Of the productions which, under this head, diversify the pages of the Rambler, the principal are, *Criticism, an Allegory*, N° 3; *Wit and Learning, an Allegory*, N° 22; *Rest and Labour, an Allegory*, N° 33; *The Garden of Hope, a Dream*, N° 67; *Patronage, an Allegory*, N° 91; *Truth, Falsehood, and Fiction, an Allegory*, N° 96; *The Voyage of Life, a Dream*, N° 102; and *The Universal Register, a Dream*, N° 105.

Among these, the *Voyage of Life* may be pointed out as superior to the rest, whether its imagery or its moral be considered. The Allegory on *Patronage* exhibits the experience of the author on the subject; nor shall we therefore be surprized that it concludes with the following paragraph, which, there is reason to regret, was not merely suggested by individual suffering, but by the general fate of those who have placed any dependence upon a source so capricious as private patronage. "The SCIENCES, after a thousand indignities, retired from the palace of PATRONAGE, and having long wandered over the world in grief and distress, were led at last to the cottage of INDEPENDENCE, the daughter of FORTITUDE;

where they were taught by PRUDENCE and PARSIMONY to support themselves in dignity and quiet."

On fictions illustrative of the common and domestic occurrences of life, our author has not bestowed many pages. The story of *Misella*, however, in Nos. 170 and 171 of the Rambler, and that of *Mysargyrus* in Nos. 34, 41, and 53 of the Adventurer, depict the miseries of prostitution and dissipation with a pencil of peculiar strength; nor was the passion of love, the assiduities of affection, ever placed in a more entertaining or pleasing light than in the Greenland story of *Anningait and Ajut*,* which, owing to its wild and savage imagery, and the felicity with which it is adapted to the circumstances of the narrative, possesses the attractions of no ordinary share of originality.†

* Rambler, Nos. 186, 187.

† Mr. Campbell, in his truly sublime poem on the Pleasures of Hope, has thus beautifully alluded to the story of Anningait and Ajut:

Oh! vainly wise, the moral Muse hath sung
That suasive Hope hath but a syren tongue!
True; she may sport with life's untutor'd day,
Nor heed the solace of its last decay,
The guileless heart, her happy mansion, spurn,
And part like Ajut—never to return.

Part 2, line 213.

It is in the *oriental* tales of the Rambler and Idler, however, and more particularly in the History of Rasselas, that we behold, in full splendor, the imagination of Johnson. Like Addison, he has reserved the creations of his fancy for prose composition; and, while his poetry can claim little more than the merit of moral and satiric energy, clothed in harmonious numbers, his narratives in language devoid of metre exhibit a profusion of the most distinct and luxuriant imagery.

In the Rambler, the *Apologue of Hamet and Raschid*, N° 88; the *Story of Obidah and the Hermit*, N° 65; the *History of Almamoulin the son of Nouradin*, N° 120; the *Story of Abouzaid the son of Morad*, N° 190; and the *History of Ten Days of Seged Emperor of Ethiopia*, Nos. 204 and 205; greatly enliven, while they add, in the most alluring form, to the preceptive wisdom of the work. In the Idler too we have three oriental tales, under the titles of *Gelaleddin of Bassora*, N° 75; *Ortogrul of Basra*, N° 99; and *Omar's Plan of Life*, N° 101; to these we may annex *The Fountains, a Fairy Tale*, published in Mrs. Williams's Miscellanies.

The popularity which the oriental tales in the Rambler and Idler acquired probably induced Johnson, when he was anxious to obtain an immediate sum, to recur, on a larger scale, to this

species of fiction. The attempt completely succeeded; for Rasselas is a production which, as Mr. Boswell has remarked, "though he had written nothing else, would have rendered his name immortal in the world of literature." *

The language of this excellent work is uncommonly pure and elegant; its imagery rich and vivid, and full of strength; and its display of human life and manners profound and various. It is defective, however, in incident and plot, and its representations of our portion in this world are too uniformly gloomy and desponding.

Rasselas appears to have been intended by its author as the vehicle for the communication of his peculiar opinions of, and experience in life; and these we well know to have been tinctured by prejudice, and narrowed by too much individuality of feeling. Perfect happiness, it is true, is not attainable on earth; but does it therefore follow, that perpetual vexation and disappointment are to be our inseparable companions? If the former would render a future state of bliss nugatory, the latter would totally unfit us for the duties of existence, and annihilate the apprehension of ulterior punishment. Yet there is, notwithstanding this tendency, so much deep and original thinking, so much just reflection in the volume,

* Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 301.

that, if the author's intention be steadily held in view, which was, by exhibiting the vanity of all sublunary things, to fix the affections on another and a better state of being, it will be impossible to study it without an increase of wisdom and of virtue.

Many of the topics which are eagerly discussed in the History of Rasselas are known to have greatly interested, and even agitated, the mind of Johnson. Of these the most remarkable are, on the *Efficacy of Pilgrimage*, on the *State of Departed Souls*, on the *Probability of the Re-appearance of the Dead*, and on the *Danger of Insanity*. The apprehension of mental derangement seems to have haunted the mind of Johnson during the greater part of his life; and he has therefore very emphatically declared, that "of the uncertainties in our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason."* It is highly probable, that his fears and feelings on this head gave rise to the character of the Mad Astronomer in Rasselas, who declared to Imlac, that he had possessed for five years the regulation of the weather, and the distribution of the seasons; that the sun had listened to his dictates, and passed from tropic to tropic by his direction; that the clouds at his call had poured their waters,

* Rasselas, chap. 42.

and the Nile had overflowed at his command. This tremendous visitation he has ascribed principally to the indulgence of imagination in the shades of solitude.

"Disorders of intellect," he remarks, "happen much more often than superficial observers will easily believe. Perhaps, if we speak with rigorous exactness, no human mind is in its right state. There is no man whose imagination does not sometimes predominate over his reason, who can regulate his attention wholly by his will, and whose ideas will come and go at his command. No man will be found in whose mind airy notions do not sometimes tyrannize, and force him to hope or fear beyond the limits of sober probability. All power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity; but while this power is such as we can control and repress, it is not visible to others, nor considered as any depravation of the mental faculties: it is not pronounced madness but when it becomes ungovernable, and apparently influences speech or action.

"To indulge the power of fiction, and send imagination out upon the wing, is often the sport of those who delight too much in silent speculation. When we are alone we are not always busy; the labour of excogitation is too violent to last long; the ardour of inquiry will sometimes give

way to idleness or satiety. He who has nothing external that can divert him, must find pleasure in his own thoughts, and must conceive himself what he is not; for who is pleased with what he is? He then expatiates in boundless futurity, and culls from all imaginable conditions that which for the present moment he should most desire, amuses his desires with impossible enjoyments, and confers upon his pride unattainable dominion. The mind dances from scene to scene, unites all pleasures in all combinations, and riots in delights which nature and fortune, with all their bounty, cannot bestow.

"In time, some particular train of ideas fixes the attention; all other intellectual gratifications are rejected; the mind, in weariness or leisure, recurs constantly to the favourite conception, and feasts on the luscious falsehood, whenever she is offended with the bitterness of truth. By degrees the reign of Fancy is confirmed; she grows first imperious, and in time despotick. Then fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture or of anguish.

"This, Sir, is one of the dangers of solitude."*

In the paragraphs which we have just quoted there is much reason to suppose, that our moralist

* Rasselas, chap. 43.

was describing what he had himself repeatedly experienced; and to this circumstance Sir John Hawkins has attributed his uncommon attachment to society.

Notwithstanding the deficiency of character and incident which marks the pages of Rasselas, it soon became a favourite with the public; nor was its reception upon the Continent less auspicious; it was early taught to charm and to instruct in the most polished languages of Europe; and there is every probability that, from its harmony of diction, from its beauty and sublimity of description, it will long continue to be admired.

The abrupt and unsatisfactory nature of its conclusion, however, must have been felt with regret by every reader; especially when we learn, on the authority of Sir John Hawkins, that it was thus purposely left incomplete by Johnson, in order to admit of a continuation; that he had, in fact, meditated a second part, and that "he meant to marry his hero, and place him in a state of permanent felicity." This anecdote gave origin, in the year 1790, to an anonymous continuation of Rasselas, under the title of *Dinarbus;* in the introduction to which, the ingenious author remarks, that "it is much to be regretted, that the same pencil which so forcibly painted the evils attendant on humanity, had not delineated

the fairer prospect. That such a prospect exists, will scarcely be denied; and if the narrative of DINARBAS, however defective, shall be found to afford any consolation or relief to the wretched traveller, terrified and disheartened at the rugged paths of life, this reflection will compensate the want of genius and literary fame of its author, who, under the veil of concealment, anxiously awaits the judgment of the critic, not wholly without ambition to merit the favour and indulgence of a candid public."

The success which attended the production of this elegant completion of Rasselas soon induced the fair author to step forward in her own person; and to Miss *E. Cornelia Knight* the public is not only indebted for *Dinarbas*, but for many subsequent important and classical compositions.*

For nearly seven years after the publication of Rasselas, the world received little from the pen of Johnson, except occasional prefaces, critiques, and dedications. Many alterations, however, took place, during this period, in the external circumstances of our author; some of which merit peculiar notice, not only as arising exclusively from his literary character, but as fixing the

* Marcus Flaminius, 2 vols. 8vo, 1792. A Description of Latium, 4to, 1805.

destiny of his future life. Finding it necessary, in the year 1759, notwithstanding all his exertions, to retrench his expences, he left his house in Gough-square, and removed to Grays Inn. Miss Williams retired to lodgings; and shortly afterwards Johnson again altered his abode for chambers in the Inner Temple Lane, where, whatever his poverty may have been, his celebrity appears to have been undiminished; for Sir John Hawkins has related, upon the authority of a person who resided at the corner of Temple Lane, that "during the time he dwelt there, more inquiries were made at his shop for Mr. Johnson, than for all the inhabitants put together of both the Inner and Middle Temple." *

After a short excursion about this time to Oxford, Johnson returned to town to receive the homage of Mr. Murphy, who addressed to him "A Poetical Epistle," the principal object of which, however, was to repel the critical shafts of Dr. Franklin. The encomia upon the poetry of our great moralist, in this epistle, are, by many degrees, too hyperbolical and extravagant; but the following couplets, toward the conclusion, may, with the exception perhaps of one line, be considered as a just tribute to his memory.

* Life of Johnson, p. 383.

Thou, then, my friend, who seest the dang'rous strife
In which some demon bids me plunge my life,
To the Aonian fount direct my feet,
Say where the Nine thy lonely musings meet?
Where warbles to thy ear the sacred throng
Thy moral sense, thy dignity of song?
Tell, for you can, by what unerring art
You wake to finer feelings every heart;
In each bright page some truth important give,
And bid to future times thy RAMBLER live.

About six years before the production of this poetical letter, Mr. Murphy had obtained an introduction to Johnson through the medium of a very singular occurrence, which I shall relate in the words of Mrs. Piozzi. Mr. Murphy "being in those days engaged in a periodical paper, he found himself at a friend's house out of town; and, not being disposed to lose pleasure for the sake of business, wished rather to content his bookseller by sending some unstudied essay to London by the servant, than deny himself the company of his acquaintance, and drive away to his chambers for the purpose of writing something more correct. He therefore took up a French *Journal Literaire* that lay about the room, and translating something that he liked from it, sent it away without further examination. Time, however, discovered that he had translated from the French a Rambler of Johnson's, which had

been but a month before taken from the English; and thinking it right to make him his personal excuses, he went next day, and found our friend all covered with soot like a chimney-sweeper, in a little room, with an intolerable heat and strange smell, as if he had been acting Lungs in the Alchymist, making *aether*. 'Come, come, (says Johnson to Mr. Murphy, who was one day relating the circumstances of their meeting before him in company,) dear Mur, the story is black enough now; and it was a very happy day for me that brought you first to my house, and a very happy mistake about the Ramblers." * The friendship to which this incident led was preserved inviolate, and is one of the many attachments that speak so strongly in favour of the companionability and social worth of Johnson.

In the year 1762, and in the fifty-third year of his age, an event occurred which effected a complete revolution in the pecuniary circumstances and domestic enjoyments of our author. The accession of George the third, through the patronage of the throne, infused, among the disciples of literature, science, and the arts, new life and animation; nor was it long before his Majesty, well acquainted with the literary merit and moral excellence of the writings of Johnson, and at the

* Piozzi's Anecdotes, p. 235, 236.

same time apprized of the difficulties with which he had to struggle, nobly determined to rescue such a man from the fangs of poverty, and to invigorate the pursuit of learning by adequately rewarding its beneficial exertions. Accordingly, in the month of July, a pension was granted to him of three hundred pounds per annum, unshackled by any stipulations; for Lord Bute expressly told him, on his accepting the bounty of his Sovereign, that it was given him, not for any thing he was to do, but for what he had done.

A pension thus honourably conferred, and implying not the smallest obligation to adopt the defence of any party or political tenet, no man, however independent in principle, would be warranted, especially under circumstances of pecuniary embarrassment, in refusing. The definitions, indeed, which Johnson had given in his Dictionary, in so unqualified a manner, of the words *pension* and *pensioner*, appeared to him at first a very formidable objection to the acceptance of the royal stipend; but the opinions of his friends, that the definitions of his Lexicon could by no means apply to himself, or to a recompense of his labours in every sense so liberal and honourable, at length convinced him that he might, without humiliation or the violation of his integrity, avail himself of the beneficence of his so-

vereign. Thus was Johnson rendered, for the residue of his life, independent; indeed, we may say affluent, if we consider that to his pension he continued to add the fruits of his literary industry.

The year succeeding this well-bestowed instance of regal patronage conferred on the author of the Rambler, in the person of Mr. Boswell, the invaluable blessing of an assiduous, a devoted, and intelligent friend. To this connection we are indebted for the most ample and interesting specimen of biography which either ancient or modern times have afforded. In the pages of Boswell, in fact, the manners and opinions, the habits, the very figure and costume of Johnson, are delineated with a pencil so minutely accurate, so spirited and racy, that the very man exists before us, instinct with all the freshness of life, and all the prominence of original genius.

To the freedom and conversational hilarity of a club Johnson, as we have remarked, was always peculiarly partial; and in 1764, in conjunction with Sir Joshua Reynolds, he established one which subsequently assumed the appellation of the LITERARY CLUB. Of this society, which, I believe, still exists, and which included in its circle most of the celebrated writers of its age, the original members were, independent of the two

founders, *Mr. Burke*, *Dr. Nugent*, *Mr. Beauclerk*, *Mr. Langton*, *Dr. Goldsmith*, *Mr. Chamier*, and *Sir John Hawkins*. Their place of meeting was originally at the Turk's Head, in Gerard-street, Soho, on the evening of every Monday, where they supped, and usually sate until a late hour. The relaxation arising from a frequent assemblage of his friends was the more necessary at this period, as he laboured under a return, much severer than common, of his morbid depression of mind: so distressing, indeed, did he find this hypochondriacal complaint, that he declared to Dr. Adams, "he would consent to have a limb amputated to recover his spirits."

About a twelvemonth after the incorporation of the Literary Club, the University of Dublin presented Johnson with the Degree of Doctor of Laws, and, as the diploma expresses it, *ob egregiam scriptorum elegantium et utilitatem;* a testimony of admiration for his talents and literature which reflects no small honour on the members of that learned body.

The year 1765 was, likewise, productive of an event of the first importance to the future comfort of our author, by his introduction to Mr. Thrale, an eminent brewer, and member of parliament for Southwark! Though in the bustle of a very lucrative trade, this gentleman was a regular scho-

lar, and to classical attainments added the inestimable advantages of a good heart and a sound understanding. Having heard much, through the medium of Mr. Murphy, of Johnson's conversation, he expressed a wish to be acquainted with him; this was soon gratified; the Doctor accepted an invitation to dinner at his house, and a friendship mutually ardent and beneficial to both parties was the result. For eleven years his visits to Mr. Thrale's continued to increase in frequency, till at length he became a part of the family, having a room allotted to him wherever they were, whether at their villa or town residence.

The patronage of Johnson has bestowed on the name of Thrale a well-merited immortality.* In the house of this noble-minded merchant he possessed all the comforts and even luxuries of life; the gloom which had so frequently and so deeply clouded his days were dissipated by the charms of conversation, by the cheerful business and routine of a well-regulated family. The affectionate

* "Mr. Thrale," says Dr. Beattie, in a letter to Sir William Forbes, "was a most respectable character; intelligent, modest, communicative, and friendly: and I greatly admired his wife for her vivacity, learning, affability, and beauty: I thought her indeed one of the most agreeable women I ever saw."

Forbes's Life of Dr. Beattie, vol. 3, p. 49.

respect, also, with which he was treated, and the varied succession of men eminent for literature and science, who were ever welcome guests at the table of Mr. Thrale, enhanced to a high degree the enjoyments of our Essayist, who was thus enabled amply to exhibit those powers in conversation for which he has been so justly celebrated.

In October, 1765, he at length, by the publication of his Shakspeare, appeared before the world in the long-expected character of a COMMENTATOR. This edition, which was in eight volumes octavo, had occupied his occasional attention for nine years, a period which seemed to the public of uncommon duration; more especially as in 1756, when he issued his proposals, he professed such confidence in his industry, as to promise the completion of the work before Christmas, 1757.

Shakspeare, however, and the propriety of undertaking a new edition of his plays, had, as we have remarked in a prior part of this volume, engaged his thoughts so early as 1745; for in that year he printed a pamphlet, entituled "Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedy of Macbeth, with Remarks on Sir T. H.'s Edition of Shakspeare." To these Observations, which were anonymous, he affixed proposals for his intended edition; but as Warburton was known to have entered into the execution of a similar design,

they attracted little notice. The pamphlet, notwithstanding, exhibits much acuteness and ingenuity; and when Warburton, two years afterward, published his Shakspeare, he made honourable mention of it in his Preface, observing that it appeared to him to be written "by a man of parts and genius;" a remark that highly gratified Johnson, and which induced him ever after to speak of Warburton in terms of praise.

The vernacular erudition of Johnson had led the public to expect from his labours on Shakspeare more than perhaps an individual can perform. The disappointment, therefore, was proportionably great, when it was discovered that he had been strangely defective in the important requisites of industry and research, and that he had omitted to consult the very literature and books best calculated to elucidate his author. When a little time, however, had mitigated the disgust arising from this unexpected failure, occasioned rather by the indolence than the inability of the editor, the value of the work, as originating from other sources, became apparent. The mode of annotation which he had chalked out for himself, though he sunk beneath the labour of exemplification, was justly deemed excellent, and has indeed been the basis on which subsequent commentators have established their fame. Mr. Reed,

in the last edition of Shakspeare, adverting to the improvements of Mr. Steevens, observes, that to him "the praise is due of having first adopted and carried into execution Dr. Johnson's admirable plan of illustrating Shakspeare by the study of writers of his own time. By following this track, most of the difficulties of the author have been overcome, his meaning (in many instances apparently lost) has been recovered, and much wild unfounded conjecture has been happily got rid of. By perseverance in this plan, he effected more to the elucidation of his author than any if not all his predecessors, and justly entitled himself to the distinction of being confessed the best editor of Shakspeare."*

* Reed's Shakspeare, 21 vols. 8vo, 1803. Vol. 1, Advertisement, p. 3, 4. The last line of the following beautiful epitaph on Steevens, by Mr. Hayley, will equally apply to the memory of Johnson:

Peace to these ashes! once the bright attire
Of Steevens, sparkling with ethereal fire!
Whose talents, varying as the diamond's ray,
Could fascinate alike the grave or gay!
How oft has pleasure in the social hour,
Smil'd at his wit's exhilarating pow'r!
And truth attested, with delight intense,
The serious charms of his colloquial sense;
His genius, that to wild luxuriance swell'd,
His large yet latent charity excell'd:

To have framed the plan by which this excellence was attained, is no trivial boast; yet a merit equally conspicuous must be attributed to his Preface, which is perhaps the most eloquent and acute piece of dramatic criticism of which our language can boast. The characteristic excellencies of Shakspeare, his beauties and defects, are delineated with powers of discrimination not easily parallelled; and though the panegyric on his genius be high and uncommonly splendid, his faults are laid open with an impartial and unsparing hand. To the prose encomia of Dryden and Addison on our unrivalled bard may be added, as worthy of juxta-position, the following admirable paragraph of our author, from this preface, the conclusion of which is alike excellent for its imagery and sublimity.

"As *the* personages *of Shakspeare* act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures

Want with such true beneficence he cheer'd,
All that his bounty gave his zeal endear'd.
Learning, as vast as mental pow'r could seize,
In sport displaying and with graceful ease,
Lightly the stage of chequer'd life he trod,
Careless of chance, confiding in his God!
This tomb may perish, but not so his name,
Who shed new lustre upon SHAKSPEARE'S *fame!*

and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former lustre; and the discrimination of true passion are the colours of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance that combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. *The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakspeare.*" *

To the noble passage distinguished by italics it is probable that Dr. Wolcot was indebted for the *prima stamina* of the following exquisite stanza, which will ever hold a most elevated station among the best poetical tributes to the genius of the bard of Avon:

* Murphy's Johnson, vol. 2, page 89.

Thus, while I wond'ring pause o'er Shakspeare's page,
I mark, in visions of delight, the Sage
High o'er the wrecks of man who stands sublime;
A column in the melancholy waste,
(Its cities humbled, and its glories past,)
Majestic 'mid the solitude of time.*

Another peculiarity of considerable value attending this edition of Shakspeare, is the critical

* For the following very elegant and fanciful description of the genius of Shakspeare, we are indebted to an incident which is thus recorded by Dr. Beattie in a letter to Mrs. Montagu. "You certainly know," says the Doctor, "that Garrick erected a statue of Shakspeare, in a niche in the wall of the town-house, facing the street. As a friend of mine was contemplating this statue, he saw, perched on one of the hands, a dove, which at first he took for an emblem, as the creature was quite motionless; but which, in a little time, began to move, and scramble upwards, till it reached the bosom of the statue, in which, as in its home, it nestled, with great appearance of satisfaction. Charles Boyd, Lord Erroll's brother, has, I hear, composed a little poem on the subject, of which I shall send you a copy, as soon as I have seen the author. If Mr. Garrick comes in your way before you leave England, I am sure he will be pleased with this little narrative."—To this Mrs. Montagu replies in a letter dated September 3d, 1775.

"I wish much to see the verses on the pretty incident of the dove's alighting on Shakspeare's statue. Of whatever nature and disposition the animal had been, he might have been presented as a symbol of Shakspeare. The gravity and deep thought of the bird of wisdom; the sublime

summary at the close of each play; this is drawn up with much judgment and precision, and usually displays a thorough acquaintance with the writings and genius of the poet. The notes too, though defective in that illustration which has since been drawn from writers contemporary with, or living near the period of Shakspeare, are, with few exceptions, highly to be estimated for acuteness in emendatory criticism, and for frequent elucidation of apparent obscurity. Mr. Malone, indeed, than whom no one has been more diligent in his researches into whatever could tend to familiarize the dramas of Shakspeare, has declared, that "Johnson's vigorous and comprehensive understanding threw more light on his author than all his predecessors had done."*

Much has certainly been done towards restoring the purity of the text of Shakspeare, by pursuing the excellent scheme which our author laid

flight of the eagle to the starry regions and the throne of Jove; the pensive song of the nightingale, when she shuns the noise of folly, and soothes the midnight visionary; the pert jackdaw, that faithfully repeats the chit-chat of the market or the shop; the sky-lark, that, soaring, seems to sing to the denizens of the air, and set her music to the tone of beings of another region;—would all assort with the genius of universal Shakspeare."

Forbes's Life of Beattie, vol. 2, p. 113, 117.

* Reed's edition of Shakspeare, vol. 1, p. 491.

down for future annotators in 1756; but, though I agree with Mr. Malone, that "when our poet's entire library shall have been discovered, and the fables of all his plays traced to their original source, when every temporary allusion shall have been pointed out, and every obscurity elucidated, then, and not till then, let the accumulation of notes be complained of;" * still I must contend, that the vast bulk of the late editions has been unnecessarily increased by *controversial* notes, which serve rather to shew the acuteness and erudition of the commentator, than the simple meaning of the text. Another source too of the gigantic size which the works of the poet now display, has arisen from the admission of plays, which, notwithstanding all their apparatus of annotation, no rational lover of Shakspeare would wish to see included in the list of his compositions. Why, in the name of common sense, should such plays as *Titus Andronicus* and the *First Part of Henry the Sixth*, which are now clearly ascertained not to have a sentence of Shakspeare in their composition, any longer be suffered to encumber and to enhance the price of his genuine productions?

I would again inquire if any favour be conferred on the public by the insertion of plays

* Reed's edition, vol. 1, p. 479.

among the works of this immortal bard which were originally written by others, and which are in themselves truly contemptible; but have been attributed to Shakspeare merely because, in deference to the wretched taste of the times, he contributed to their ill-acquired popularity, by the contribution of a score or two of lines or phrases? In this predicament stand Love's Labour Lost, the Comedy of Errors, and Pericles Prince of Tyre; productions which are a disgrace to the name of Shakspeare, and which, could he again start into existence, he would immediately expunge from his works. The originals of these miserable plays were, probably, according to the custom of the theatre at that period, placed by the manager in the hands of Shakspeare for the purpose of slight amendment; I call it *slight*, for, if from the first of these dramas about fifty lines and the song at the close were withdrawn, nothing indicative of the genius of Shakspeare would remain. The Comedy of Errors, which has been partly taken, by some wretched playwright, from the Menæchmi of Plautus, is still more intolerably stupid: that it may occasionally display the touch of Shakspeare cannot be denied; but these *purpurei panni* are lamentably infrequent; and, to adopt the language of Mr. Steevens, "that the entire play was no work of his, is an opinion

which (as Benedick says) 'fire cannot melt out of me; I will die in it at the stake.'" *

Of the play of Pericles Mr. Steevens has given an opinion in which most of the readers of Shakspeare will coincide. "This drama," he observes, "contains no discrimination of manners, (except in the comic dialogues,) very few traces of original thought, and is evidently destitute of that intelligence and useful knowledge that pervade even the meanest of Shakspeare's undisputed performances. *Pericles*, in short, is nothing more than a string of adventures, so numerous, so inartificially crouded together, and so far removed from probability, that, in my private judgment, I must acquit even the irregular and lawless Shakspeare of having constructed the fabrick of the drama, though he has certainly bestowed some decoration on its parts. Yet even this decoration, like embroidery on a blanket, only serves by contrast to expose the meanness of the original materials. That the plays of Shakspeare have their inequalities, likewise, is sufficiently understood; but they are still the inequalities of Shakspeare. He may occasionally be absurd, but is seldom foolish; he may be censured, but can rarely be despised." †

* Note on Comedy of Errors, Reed's edition, vol. 20, p. 461.

† Reed's Shakspeare, vol. 21, p. 396, 397.

It would be adviseable, therefore, in every future edition of Shakspeare intended for general use, to omit altogether the plays of Titus Andronicus and Henry the Sixth, part 1st, and to collect in a small Appendix, after giving an outline of each fable, those few passages in Love's Labour Lost, the Comedy of Errors, and Pericles, which seem to have issued from the pen of Shakspeare. On this plan we shall have no drama in the works of our poet but what is either entirely of his composition, or so greatly improved by his genius as justly to be considered as his property. Another circumstance, likewise of great importance, arising from this arrangement, will be, that we shall then meet with no play in this collection but what may be read with instruction and delight. It would be impossible, I think, to induce any one but a commentator to peruse the plays we propose to omit, a second time; and why, under the circumstances which have been noticed, they should be suffered, with all their paraphernalia of notes, to occupy nearly two octavo volumes of the last edition, the public, I think, has a right to inquire.

Returning, however, to the consideration of Johnson as an editor and a commentator, it may be remarked, that his excellencies in this department have long since atoned for his defects; and

with the exception of one attack, conducted very illiberally and very virulently, by Dr. William Kenrick, he had not much reason to complain of the fate which attended his labours on Shakspeare.

Shortly after this period our author removed to a respectable looking house in Johnson's Court, Fleet-street, where he again enjoyed the society of Miss Williams, who had a room on the ground floor, and was as usual attended upon by Mr. Levett and his servant Francis.

The year 1767 was rendered memorable to Johnson by the opportunity which it afforded him of a private conversation with his Majesty at Buckingham House. The interview took place by desire of the King, and unknown to our author, who, being in the habit of occasionally visiting the noble library at the Queen's Palace, was one day surprized by the sovereign, whilst sitting by the fire, intent on the perusal of a book. The dialogue which ensued is equally honourable to both parties; and the King complimented Johnson on his writings in a style so handsome, that he declared to Mr. Boswell that "it was fit for a king to pay; it was decisive." His Majesty having inquired whether the Doctor meant to present the public with any more productions, and being answered by Johnson that he thought he had written

enough; "And I should have thought so too," replied the King, "if you had not written so well."

"During the whole of this interview," says Mr. Boswell, "Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing-room. After the King withdrew, Johnson shewed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation and gracious behaviour. He said to Mr. Bernard (the librarian,) 'Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen.' And he afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, 'Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second.'" *

On the institution of the Royal Academy of Arts, Johnson was honoured by an appointment to the Professorship of Ancient Literature. This promotion took place early in 1769, a year which seems to have been dedicated by him to excursive amusement, as he visited Oxford and Lichfield in the summer, and Brighthelmstone in the autumn.

It is with some reluctance that, in consequence

* Life of Johnson, vol. 2, p. 41, 42.

of the publication of his *False Alarm* in 1770, we now turn to the consideration of Johnson as a POLITICIAN; a province in which, notwithstanding his talents and power of language, he appears to little advantage. It will not be necessary, however, to dwell long upon such an ungrateful subject.

So early indeed as 1738 Johnson had been engaged by Mr. Cave to revise the Parliamentary Debates which were printed in the Gentleman's Magazine from the notes and arrangement of Guthrie; but in November, 1740, the entire task devolved upon our author of composing the speeches from the notes of persons employed to attend the two houses, an engagement which he continued punctually to fulfil for about three years. The elegance and occasional energy of the style of these debates, and the splendor of their eloquence, have been much and justly admired. They occasioned, however, at a subsequent period of his life, much uneasiness to their author, who deemed them a culpable deception on the public. They were considered indeed as genuine for many years, nor did the secret transpire otherwise than by the confession of Johnson himself, who one day dining at Mr. Foote's with Mr. Wedderburne, afterwards Lord Loughborough, Dr. Francis, (the translator of Horace,) Mr. Mur-

phy, and other literary characters, an important debate towards the end of Sir Robert Walpole's administration being mentioned, Dr. Francis observed, that "Mr. Pitt's speech on that occasion was the best he had ever read." He added, that "he had employed eight years of his life in the study of Demosthenes, and finished a translation of that celebrated orator, with all the decorations of style and language within the reach of his capacity; but he had met with nothing equal to the speech above-mentioned." Many of the company remembered the debate; and some passages were cited, with the approbation and applause of all present. During the ardour of conversation Johnson remained silent. As soon as the warmth of praise subsided, he opened with these words: "That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter-street." The company was struck with astonishment. After staring at each other in silent amaze, Dr. Francis asked, "How that speech could be written by him?" "Sir," said Johnson, "I wrote it in Exeter-street. I never had been in the gallery of the House of Commons but once. Cave had interest with the door-keepers. He, and the persons under him, gained admittance: they brought away the subject of discussion, the names of the speakers, the side they took, and the order in which they rose, together with notes of

the arguments advanced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form which they now have in the Parliamentary Debates." To this discovery Dr. Francis made answer, "Then, Sir, you have exceeded Demosthenes himself; for to say that you have exceeded Francis's Demosthenes, would be saying nothing." The rest of the company bestowed lavish encomiums on Johnson: one, in particular, praised his impartiality, observing that he dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. "That is not quite true," said Johnson; "I saved appearances tolerably well; but I took care that the WHIG DOGS should not have the best of it." *

This strong bias in favour of a party runs through the whole of his political works, though not so discernible in his early compositions of this kind. In 1756 he contributed to the *Literary Magazine* "An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain;" "Remarks on the Militia Bill;" "Observations on his Britannick Majesty's Treaties with the Empress of Russia and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel;" and "Observations

* Murphy's Essay on the Life and Genius of Johnson, p. 44, 45.—Johnson's Debates were collected in two volumes octavo by Mr. Stockdale.

on the Present State of Affairs." These all exhibit along with his customary excellence of style, an extensive field of political information and legislative knowledge; but it was not until the publication of his *False Alarm* that he attracted the attention of the public as a writer in support of government. This once celebrated pamphlet was written in justification of the conduct of ministers, who attempted to prove that the expulsion of a member of Parliament was equivalent to exclusion; a doctrine upon which they had the audacity to act, by declaring the election of Colonel Luttrel to be valid, although Mr. Wilkes had obtained a decided majority of votes. So flagrant a violation of the right of election excited an unusual alarm throughout the kingdom; and to dissipate this, and prove it void of foundation, was the Herculean task of our author, who, it is almost unnecessary to say, completely failed in the undertaking, though he exerted all his talents and command of language in the cause. The coarse abuse indeed, and the arbitrary sentiments which he sometimes descends to adopt, reflect no credit on his memory; and though, as coming from his pen, it was read at the time with avidity, it may now without any regret be resigned to oblivion. The House of Commons, it should be remarked, have since seen the folly of their intemperate

ttack on the constitution, and have rescinded the esolution from their journals.

The political career of Johnson received no heck from the numerous aspersions on his cha- acter which the opposite party took care to dis- eminate. The year succeeding the publication of his *False Alarm*, he printed *Thoughts on the late Transactions respecting Falkland's Islands*, 8vo; the materials of which were furnished by the ministry, and were intended as a defence of the line which they pursued in their dispute with the Court of Spain concerning the right of dominion over those barren tracks. This ranks among the most splendid of the compositions of Johnson, and, though perhaps erroneous in a political light, will be read with great pleasure by every friend to humanity, as containing one of the most eloquent dissuasives from offensive war. It comprises, likewise, a severe and well-merited attack on the character and writings of *Junius*.

The temporary celebrity which our moralist had now acquired as a politician, induced his friend Mr. Strahan to wish for his introduction in the House of Commons. Well acquainted with his predilection for government, and justly entertaining a high idea of his oratorial powers, he concluded that as a member of parliament he might be of essential service to administration. He

accordingly proposed the plan to one of the Secretaries of State; but, from some cause not hitherto discovered, the application proved ineffectual.

On the return of a general election in 1774, in which his friend Mr. Thrale had the unpleasant prospect of a warm contest, Johnson again came forward in the arena, and published a short pamphlet under the title of *The Patriot; addressed to the Electors of Great Britain*, 8vo. To define what a Patriot is; to expose the characters of the opposition who arrogated to themselves the appellation of Patriots; indirectly to defend the outrage of the Commons with regard to the Middlesex election; and to repel the claims of America, are the objects of this address, which includes much sophistry in argument, much asperity of language, and much sarcastic contempt of his adversaries.

The production, however, which displays, in the broadest light, the arbitrary principles, and party zeal of Johnson, was published in 1775, and entitled *Taxation no Tyranny, an Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*, 8vo. In this intemperate performance will be found the most violent and unmerited abuse of the Americans, who, he contended, though possessing a legislature of their own, ought to be taxed by a British Parliament, in which they had neither peers nor representatives; and in default

of consent to this reasonable proposition, he recommends the employment of force, "such a force as may take away, not only the power, but the hope of resistance."*

With regard to this virulent philippic, even his enthusiastic friend Mr. Boswell speaks in a tone of decided reprehension; "the extreme violence," he says, "which it breathed, appeared to me so unsuitable to the mildness of a christian philosopher, and so directly opposite to the principles of peace which he had so beautifully recommended in his pamphlet respecting Falkland's Islands, that I was sorry to see him appear in so unfavourable a light. Besides, I could not perceive in it that ability of argument, or that felicity of expression, for which he was, upon other occasions, so eminent. Positive assertion, sarcastical severity, and extravagant ridicule, which he himself reprobated as a test of truth, were united in this rhapsody."†

For these high-toned ministerial pamphlets he was severely censured by many respectable literary characters, nor was his situation as a pensioner spared in the controversy. It does not appear, however, that in writing these pamphlets, notwithstanding the last was undertaken at the ex-

* Murphy's edition of Johnson, vol. 8, p. 201.
† Life of Johnson, vol. 2. p. 321.

press desire of the ministry, he was delivering any other than his own real sentiments; and it is highly probable that, if he had never received a farthing from government, and had voluntarily engaged in the contest, he would have expressed himself with the same vehemence and partiality. As early as 1769, speaking of the Americans to Dr. John Campbell, he exclaimed, "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for any thing we allow them short of hanging."*

For rancour and abuse, for want of candour and of justice, however, there can be no apology, and it must be greatly regretted by every good and wise man, that Johnson, whose pen had been productive of so much moral excellence, should ever be induced to dip it in party politics.†

By the publication, in 1775, of his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, Johnson became entitled to the appellation of a TOURIST. This excursion he undertook, in company with Mr. Boswell, in the autumn of 1773; it had long been an object of contemplation with him, and he had for many years delighted to talk over the intended route; his father, indeed, when he was

* Life of Johnson, vol. 2, p. 321.

† Johnson published these Tracts in one volume 8vo, in 1775, under the title of *Political Tracts, by the author of the Rambler.*

very young, had put Martin's Voyage to St. Kilda into his hands; with which he was so highly pleased, that it is probable the wish of visiting these remote islands then commenced.

He reached Scotland on the 18th of August, and left it, on his return to London, the 22d of November. He went by the way of Berwick upon Tweed to Edinburgh; where having passed a few days, he prosecuted his route to the Hebrides, through St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Inverness, and Fort Augustus. He then visited the isles of Sky, Rasay, Col, Mull, Inchkenneth, and Icolmkill, and, regaining the continent, travelled through Argyleshire, by Inverary, and thence by Lochlomond, Dumbarton, Glasgow, &c. to the northern metropolis, where he again spent some time before he finally quitted it for England.

The conversation which took place between Johnson and the literati of Scotland, and the various adventures which occurred during this singular peregrination, have been recorded with characteristic fidelity by Mr. Boswell, in his "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides;" a work abundantly stored with amusement, and which Mr. Courtenay has delineated in the following just, though encomiastic lines: speaking of Johnson, he says,

With Reynolds' pencil, vivid, bold, and true,
So fervent Boswell gives him to our view:
In every trait we see his mind expand;
The master rises by the pupil's hand;
We love the writer, praise his happy vein,
Grac'd with the naiveté of the sage Montaigne.
Hence not alone are brighter parts display'd,
But e'en the specks of character pourtray'd:
We *see* the Rambler, with fastidious smile,
Mark the lone tree, and note the heath-clad isle;
But when th' heroick tale of Flora charms,
Deck'd in a kilt, he wields a chieftain's arms:
The tuneful piper sounds a martial strain,
And Samuel sings, 'The King shall have his *ain*.'

The very interesting narrative which Johnson himself published of this Journey, in 1775, is very deservedly esteemed a first-rate performance, and a model for those travellers, who traverse a country rather with a view of describing the manners and literature of the people, than the appearance and natural productions of the territory. Yet, though principally occupied during this tour, in noting the progress of civilization, and in philosophising on the various stages of society, he has occasionally sketched the face of the country with the pencil of a master, with touches that would not have disgraced the genius of Ruysdale, or Salvator Rosa. A passage taken from that part of his journey, in which he passes from Anoch to Glensheals, will bear ample testimony

to the truth of this encomium. Describing the mountains of this wild and unfrequented region, he remarks,

"Of the hills, many may be called, with *Homer's Ida, abundant in springs*, but few can deserve the epithet which he bestows upon *Pelion*, by *waving their leaves*. They exhibit very little variety; being almost wholly covered with dark heath, and even that seems to be checked in its growth. What is not heath is nakedness, a little diversified by now and then a stream rushing down the steep. An eye accustomed to flowery pastures and waving harvests, is astonished and repelled by this wide extent of hopeless sterility. The appearance is that of matter incapable of form or usefulness; dismissed by nature from her care, and disinherited of her favours; left in its original elemental state, or quickened only with one sullen power of useless vegetation.

"Regions mountainous and wild, thinly inhabited, and little cultivated, make a great part of the earth; and he that has never seen them, must live unacquainted with much of the face of nature, and with one of the great scenes of human existence.

"As the day advanced towards noon, we entered a narrow valley not very flowery, but sufficiently verdant. Our guides told us, that the

horses could not travel all day without rest or meat, and entreated us to stop here, because no grass would be found in any other place. The request was reasonable, and the argument cogent. We therefore willingly dismounted, and diverted ourselves as the place gave us opportunity.

"I sat down on a bank, such as a writer of romance might have delighted to feign. I had indeed no trees to whisper over my head, but a clear rivulet streamed at my feet. The day was calm, the air was soft, and all was rudeness, silence, and solitude. Before me, and on either side, were high hills, which, by hindering the eye from ranging, forced the mind to find entertainment for itself. Whether I spent the hour well I know not; for here I first conceived the thoughts of this narration."*

"We congratulate the public," say very elegantly the Critical Reviewers of Johnson's Journey, "on the event with which this quotation concludes, and are fully persuaded, that the hour in which the entertaining traveller conceived this narrative, will be considered, by every reader of taste, as a fortunate event in the annals of literature. Were it suitable to the task in which we are at present engaged, to indulge ourselves in a poetical flight, we would invoke the winds of

* Murphy's Johnson, vol. 8, p. 253, 254, 255.

the Caledonian mountains to blow for ever, with their softest breezes, on the bank where our author reclined; and request of Flora, that it might be perpetually adorned with the gayest and most fragrant productions of the year."

That Johnson, long previous to the commencement of his tour, was somewhat prejudiced against the Scotch, cannot be denied; but that he has in his narrative wilfully misrepresented their country, their manners, and progress in civilization, no impartial person will admit. He had observed, indeed, with strong dislike, the peculiar nationality of the Scotch; but he had likewise declared, that "whenever he found a Scotchman to whom an Englishman was as a Scotchman, that Scotchman should be as an Englishman to him." In describing the face of the soil he has unintentionally given great offence, by stating the simple truth that it is bare of trees; a defect, which time, and the taste and spirit of the present generation, will in a few years remove; to the bold, the sublime, and wild features of Caledonian landscape, he has done abundant justice;* and, with regard to the

* The following exquisite picture of the Highlands of Scotland, is from the pen of Dr. Beattie. "The Highlands of Scotland are a picturesque, but, in general, a melancholy country. Long tracts of mountainous desert covered with dark heath, and often obscured by misty

people, if we take into consideration his rooted aversion to calvinism, and the numerous conveniences to which he had been accustomed in a large

weather; narrow vallies, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices, resounding with the fall of torrents; a soil so rugged, and a climate so dreary, as in many parts to admit neither the amusements of pasturage, nor the labours of agriculture; the mournful dashing of waves along the friths and lakes that intersect the country; the portentous noises which every change of the wind, and every increase and diminution of the waters, is apt to raise, in a lonely region, full of echoes, and rocks, and caverns; the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape by the light of the moon:—Objects like these diffuse a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occasional and social merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts of a native in the hour of silence and solitude.—Most of their superstitions are of a melancholy cast. That *second sight*, wherewith some of them are still supposed to be haunted, is considered by themselves as a misfortune, on account of the many dreadful images it is said to obtrude upon the fancy. I have been told, that the inhabitants of some of the Alpine regions do likewise lay claim to a sort of second sight. Nor is it wonderful, that persons of lively imagination, immured in deep solitude, and surrounded with the stupendous scenery of clouds, precipices, and torrents, should dream, even when they think themselves awake, of those few striking ideas with which their lonely lives are diversified; of corpses, funeral processions, and other objects of terror; or of marriages, and the arrival of strangers, and such like matters of more agreeable curiosity. Let it be observed also, that

metropolis, we shall no longer wonder at his occasional fretfulness and irritation. It should never be forgotten, likewise, that to the hospitality, the kindness and courtesy which he so generally experienced on his route through the Highlands, he has paid the most grateful acknowledgments.

Another source of invective, which he experienced from the publication of his travels, originated in his denial of the authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Ossian. The enthusiasm of the Scotch for their supposed epic poet, was, at this period, at its height; and the scepticism of Johnson, as it was likely to carry great weight, and was expressed in his usual bold and undaunted manner, gave great offence. Mr. Macpherson, in particular, was roused to the highest pitch of resentment by the following paragraph: "I believe," says the tourist, "they (the Poems of Ossian) never existed in any other form than that which we have seen. The editor, or author, never

the ancient Highlanders of Scotland had hardly any other way of supporting themselves, than by hunting, fishing, or war, professions that are continually exposed to fatal accidents. And hence, no doubt, additional horrors would often haunt their solitude, and a deeper gloom overshadow the imagination even of the hardiest native."

Beattie on Poetry and Music, p. 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 8vo edition.

could shew the original; nor can it be shewn by any other. To revenge reasonable incredulity, by refusing evidence, is a degree of insolence, with which the world is not yet acquainted; and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of guilt." Macpherson had the folly to suppose that he could stifle the just indignation of Johnson by intimidation, and he accordingly sent him a letter, in which he threatened, it is said, to have recourse to corporal chastisement. Nothing could, perhaps, be more indicative of conscious guilt than this conduct; and nothing could more decidedly prove his total ignorance of the character and temper of his opponent, who replied to him in the subsequent terms.

"MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,

"I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the publick, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear

of your morals, inclines me to pay regard, not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

This spirited defiance effectually cooled the ardour of the editor of Ossian, more especially when he learnt that Johnson had provided himself with an oaken stick, six feet in height, an inch in diameter at the lower end, and three inches near the upper, which was surmounted by a head of the size of an orange; a weapon calculated to make a durable impression when wielded by the gigantic arm of our sturdy moralist.

The opinion of Johnson as to the authenticity of Ossian has gained ground with the public, and there are now few unprejudiced persons who persist in crediting the antiquity of these poems. Whether ancient or modern, however, their merit is certainly considerable; and our author deserves no small portion of censure, for suffering controversial asperity so far to blind him to their beauties, as to declare, that "many men, many women, and many children, could have written such poems."*

The year 1775 was likewise productive of another event of much importance in his literary

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 1, p. 355.

life; in the month of March, the university of Oxford, at the request of Lord North, conferred on him the degree of Doctor in Civil Law by diploma, accompanying it with the highest praise of his writings and genius. With this dignity, and with the mode of bestowing it, he was much gratified, though, it has been said, he seldom assumed the title.*

In the September also of this year, he made a tour to France with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and Mr. Baretti, the only time that he ever visited the continent. This excursion occupied about two months, and he preserved minutes of what he saw, with an intention of one day presenting them to the world in a revised and much augmented state; an intention, however, which he never found leisure to execute.

* "It is remarkable," observes Mr. Boswell, "that he never, so far as I knew, assumed his title of *Doctor*, but called himself *Mr.* Johnson, as appears from many of his cards or notes to myself; and I have seen many from him to other persons, in which he uniformly takes that designation. I once observed on his table a letter directed to him with the addition of *Esquire*, and objected to it as being a designation inferior to that of Doctor; but he checked me, and seemed pleased with it, because, as I conjectured, he liked to be sometimes taken out of the class of literary men, and to be merely *genteel—un gentilhomme comme un autre.*"

A few months after his return from France, he left his house in Johnson's Court, and took a larger in Bolt Court, Fleet-street. Here he had the enjoyment of a garden, and a larger space for his books, which now amounted to five thousand volumes, and occupied the upper floors of the mansion. He continued also to amuse himself with chemistry, and had here, and likewise at Streatham, a laboratory and apparatus.

The charity of Dr. Johnson, the most amiable feature in his character, encreased in proportion to his power; he not only accommodated Miss Williams, in Bolt Court, with a room on the ground floor, but he likewise appropriated an apartment in his house for Mrs. Desmoulins, her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael; allowing the first of these ladies, the daughter of his god-father, Dr. Swinfen, half-a-guinea a week. Indeed, no object of distress or poverty ever left the presence of Johnson, if it fell within his means, unrelieved.

In the year 1777, the compassion of our author was strongly excited by the miserable fate of the Rev. Dr. Dodd, condemned to death for forgery; a man who had been extremely popular as a preacher, had written many theological works, and had been peculiarly active in the encouragement of public charities. Void of all economy, and latterly licentious in his manners,

he was induced, in order to prevent a disclosure of his circumstances, to forge a bond, and falsify the name of Lord Chesterfield, to whom he had formerly been a tutor. In the hour of his distress, he implored, through the medium of Lady Harrington, the assistance of Johnson, who, with his customary benevolence, did all he could to save him. He accordingly composed for him his *Speech to the Recorder of London;* the *Convict's Address to his unhappy Brethren*, a sermon; two *Letters*, one to Lord Bathurst, and another to Lord Mansfield; *A Petition from Dr. Dodd to the King; A Petition from Mrs. Dodd to the Queen; Observations* on a Petition for mercy to Dr. Dodd, signed by twenty thousand names; *A Petition from the City of London;* and Dr. Dodd's *Last Solemn Declaration.*

When every application for the royal mercy had failed, Dr. Dodd prepared himself for death in a manner truly worthy of a christian, and at midnight, on June 25th, about two days previous to his execution, wrote the following affecting farewel letter to Dr. Johnson.

"Accept, thou *great* and *good* heart, my earnest and fervent thanks and prayers for all thy benevolent and kind efforts in my behalf.—Oh! Dr. Johnson! as I sought your knowledge at an early hour in life, would to heaven I had cultivated

the love and acquaintance of so excellent a man! I pray GOD, most sincerely, to bless you with the highest transports,—the infelt satisfaction of *humane* and benevolent exertions! And admitted, as I trust I shall be, to the realms of bliss before you, I shall hail *your* arrival there with transports, and rejoice to acknowledge that you was my comforter, my advocate, and my *friend!* GOD *be ever* with *you!*"

To this, on the next day, Dr. Johnson replied in the subsequent impressive manner.

"TO THE REV. DR. DODD.

"DEAR SIR,

"That which is appointed to all men is now coming upon you. Outward circumstances, the eyes and the thoughts of men, are below the notice of an immortal being about to stand the trial for eternity, before the supreme judge of heaven and earth. Be comforted: your crime, morally or religiously considered, has no very deep dye of turpitude. It corrupted no man's principles; it attacked no man's life. It involved only a temporary and reparable injury. Of this, and of all other sins, you are earnestly to repent; and may GOD, who knoweth our frailty, and desireth not our death, accept your repentance, for the sake of his Son JESUS CHRIST our Lord.

"In requital of those well-intended offices,

which you are pleased so emphatically to acknowledge, let me beg that you make in your devotions one petition for my eternal welfare. I am, dear Sir,

" Your affectionate servant,

" SAM. JOHNSON."

The part which Dr. Johnson took in behalf of this unhappy man, is strongly indicative of the great tenderness and goodness of his heart.

In the May of this year, our author entered into an engagement, which has been productive of the most interesting of all his labours, the *Lives of the English Poets*; and in 1779, by the publication of the first four volumes of this work, he immediately took his rank as the first CRITIC of his nation.

He had long previously, however, by many detached pieces of criticism, independent of his exertions as a biographer, lexicographer, and commentator, given the world a very favourable idea of his powers in this department, and, before we enter upon the consideration of his *Lives*, it will be necessary to take a cursory review of these elegant, though less important, specimens.

His earliest production, in this pleasing branch of literature, was published in 1740, in the Gentleman's Magazine, and entituled, *An Essay on Epitaphs*; in which he attempts to shew in what

the perfection of Epitaphs consists, and what rules are to be observed in composing them.

In 1748, he prefixed an elaborate *Preface* to Dodsley's *Preceptor*. It commences with general observations on the importance of education; then draws a masterly outline of the scope and intention of the book; and lastly, enumerates and describes its various subdivisions. The style is easy and perspicuous, and the remarks such as indicate an intimate knowledge of the subject.

The RAMBLER can boast of several very excellent critical papers, though not so numerous as might have been expected from Johnson's predilection for this study. Nos. 36 and 37 discuss the frequently-considered topic of *Pastoral Poetry;* and if nothing very original can be found in these essays, they, at least, present us with a very just and correct view of the subject. Our author appears, indeed, to have entertained opinions on the structure of the pastoral, very similar to those which actuated Gesner in the composition of his beautiful Idyls: "Pastoral admits of all ranks of persons, because persons of all ranks inhabit the country. It excludes not, therefore, on account of the characters necessary to be introduced, any elevation or delicacy of sentiment; those ideas only are improper, which, not owing their original to rural objects, are not pastoral;"

a definition which, if more attended to by our poets, might soon remove the accusation of *servile imitation*, hitherto, with few exceptions, so justly attached to this species of poetry.

N° 60, on the *Dignity and Usefulness of Biography*, is an eulogy, not exaggerated, on a species of composition, which was deservedly a great favourite with the author. Than literary biography, indeed, if well executed, I know not a more interesting, or more useful study.

Remarks on the *Versification of Milton*, occupy Nos. 86, 88, 90, 92, and 94; his elisions, pauses, and adaptations of sound to sense, are dwelt upon with minute discrimination, with great candour, and great judgement. N° 93, on the *Prejudices and Caprices of Criticism;* N° 106, on the *Vanity of authors, and the neglect of good authors;* and N° 121, on *Imitation*, possess much curious and interesting discussion; this last paper insists much on the folly and impropriety of imitating the language and stanza of Spenser; the obsolete words of this amiable poet, indeed, it would be pedantry to attempt to revive; but who, that has read the productions of Mickle and Beattie, would wish the structure of the stanza of Spenser, and the occasional use of his more polished diction, laid aside?

The critique on the *English Historians*, in N°

122, is chiefly remarkable for an ill-founded eulogium on the style of Knolles; which, so far from meriting the appellations of pure, nervous, elevated, and clear, has contributed, from its intricacy and mal-construction, more than any other circumstance, to cover his memory with oblivion.

Our author again recurs to Milton in Nos. 139 and 140, where he has presented us with a review of Sampson Agonistes; to this sublime drama, however, he has done evident injustice, by asserting, that it wants a middle, and that "nothing passes betwen the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Sampson." Mr. Cumberland, nevertheless, has most satisfactorily proved, that this middle part of the tragedy is occupied by incidents which directly conduce to the catastrophe, and but for which it could not have come to pass. To this able defence, therefore, of the injured poet, I refer the reader.*

The seven following essays, which complete our list of the critical papers of the Rambler, exhibit little to which the most fastidious reader can object; namely, N° 143, *On the Criterions of Plagiarism;* N° 152, *On Epistolary Writing;* N° 156, *On Dramatic Laws;* N° 158, *On the Fallacy and Uncertainty of Critical Rules;* N° 168, *On*

* Vide Observer, No. 111.

the Debasement of Poetry by Mean Expressions; N° 169, *On Labour as necessary to Excellence;* and N° 176, *On the various Degrees of critical Perspicacity.* Elegance of style, and acuteness of remark, characterize these as well as most of the lucubrations of the Rambler.

Of the papers which our author contributed to the ADVENTURER, there are but four that can properly rank under the present head; N° 58, *On the Presumption of Modern Criticism;* N° 92, *On the Pastorals of Virgil;* N° 95, *An Apology for apparent Plagiarism;* and N° 137, *On the Utility of Authors.* The critique on the Eclogues of Virgil, is peculiarly discriminative and just; though when he affirms of the second eclogue, that it contains not "one affecting sentiment, or pleasing description, or one passage that strikes the imagination, or awakens the passions," it must be confessed, that the severity of the critic, occasioned probably by the unnatural passion alluded to in that pastoral, has blinded him to the perception of some very beautiful lines.

The second volume of the IDLER includes not less than twelve papers, the object of which is criticism. N° 59 treats *On the Cause of the neglect of Books;* N° 63, *On the Progress of Arts and Languages;* N° 65, *On Posthumous Works;* N° 66, *On the Loss of Ancient Writings;* N° 68,

and N° 69, *On the History of Translations;* N° 70, *On Hard Words;* N° 77, *On Easy Writing;* N° 84, *On the best Method of writing Biography;* N° 85, *On Compilations;* N° 91, *On the Sufficiency of the English Language;* and N° 97, *On the Narratives of Travellers.*

The Apology, in N° 70, for the use of Hard Words, may be considered by the reader, as it was certainly by Johnson himself, as a kind of self-defence; and it may be added, that it is satisfactory and well supported. "They," he remarks, "that content themselves with general ideas, may rest in general terms; but those whose studies or employments force them upon closer inspection, must have names for particular parts, and words by which they may express various modes of combination, such as none but themselves have occasion to consider."

The critical essays in the Idler, though brief, and not so much elaborated as those that are dispersed through the Rambler, display much sound judgment, and preceptive acumen, in an easy style of expression, and therefore please more generally, and are better understood, than more recondite observation, in more studied periods.

We have related that Johnson, principally out of friendship to Smart, was a contributor to the

Universal Visitor; and among these papers we have to record two; a *Dissertation on Pope's Epitaphs*, which was afterwards appended to the second volume of the *Idler*, and a *Dissertation* on the state of literature and authors. Many very ingenious remarks may be found in the first of these contributions; but the criticism is too minute, and sometimes trifling and fastidious.

To the *Literary Magazine*, which commenced in May, 1756, our author sent twenty-five reviews; many of these are very brief, but a few may be selected, which are worthy of the genius of the writer. Under the subject of which we are at present treating, two of them may be arranged, as very elegant and judicious critiques; viz. the Review of *Warton's Essays on the Writings and Genius of Pope, vol.* 1; and of *Blackwell's Memoirs of the Court of Augustus.* He likewise contributed to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a Review of *Tytler's Vindication of Mary Queen of Scots;* to the *London Chronicle*, a Review of *Grainger's Sugar Cane*, a Didactic Poem; and to the *Critical Review*, a Review of *Goldsmith's Traveller*, and of *Graham's Telemachus*, a Masque.

But the volumes which, in this department, from their striking features and extent, are best entitled to our full consideration, are the "LIVES

OF THE ENGLISH POETS;" a work that has excited a large portion both of praise and censure.

Before the appearance of this poetic biography, little had been done to preserve the memory, or illustrate the writings, of our bards. Shakspeare, indeed, had been amply attended to; but, beyond the pale of the Drama, few of the cultivators of English poetry had attracted due notice. The catalogue, therefore, of those who preceded Dr. Johnson will necessarily be short.

In the year 1675, Edward Phillips, the nephew of Milton, published his "Theatrum Poetarum, or a complete collection of the Poets, especially the most eminent of all ages; the ancients distinguished from the moderns in their several alphabets.—With some observations and reflections upon many of them, particularly those of our own nation.—Together with a prefatory discourse of the poets, and poetry in general." The notices in this work are very short, and are seldom productive of biographic incident; the Prefatory Discourse is an essay of much taste and merit.*

"The Lives of the most famous English Poets," by William Winstanley, which were published in

* A further account of the *Theatrum Poetarum*, will be found in the second volume of my Essays on the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian, p. 135.

one volume 8vo, in 1687, are little more than the characters of Phillips extended by common biographic matter, and in a style of insufferable vulgarity.

Giles Jacob, in 1723, printed in two volumes octavo, "The Poetical Register: or the lives and characters of all the English poets, with an account of their writings.—Adorned with curious sculptures, engraven by the best masters." Of this work, the second volume is devoted to the dramatic poets, but the first, which is more immediately our object, includes no less than two hundred and seventeen names! Except in the industry, however, of collecting together many almost forgotten writers, it possesses little value.

To a Mr. Coxeter, a man well versed in old English literature, and an industrious collector of scarce books, we are indebted for many curious materials for the biography of our poets. Johnson, when talking to Mr. Boswell of the propriety of forming a collection of all the English Poets who had published a volume of poems, added, "that a Mr. Coxeter, whom he knew, had gone the greatest lengths toward this; having collected about five hundred volumes of poets whose works were little known; but that upon his death Tom Osborne bought them, and they were dispersed; which he thought a pity, as it was curious

to see any series complete; and in every volume of poems something good may be found." Mr. Coxeter died in 1747; but the materials which he had so laboriously amassed, were made use of in a publication which appeared in 1753, in five volumes duodecimo, under the following title:

"The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the time of Dean Swift.—Compiled from ample materials, scattered in a variety of books, and especially from the MS notes of the late ingenious Mr. Coxeter and others, collected for this design. By Mr. Cibber."

Dr. Johnson believed that Mr. Shiels, a Scotchman, and one of his amanuenses, was the sole author of these lives; and that the booksellers imposed upon the public, by giving ten guineas to Theophilus Cibber, that they might be allowed to place *Mr. Cibber* on the title-page; by which means, they were in hopes that the work would be ascribed to the elder Cibber, and obtain, in consequence, a rapid sale.*

This account, however, which our author considered as a fact, and has himself published in the Life of Hammond, has been clearly disproved in the Monthly Review for May, 1792; which informs us, that "Shiels was the principal collector and digester of the materials for the work: but

* See Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 3, p. 29, 30, 31.

as he was very raw in authorship, an indifferent writer in prose, and his language full of Scotticisms, Cibber, who was a clever, lively fellow, and then soliciting employment among the booksellers, was engaged to correct the style and diction of the whole work, then intended to make only four volumes, with power to alter, expunge, or add, as he liked. He was also to supply *notes*, occasionally, especially concerning those dramatic poets with whom he had been chiefly conversant. He also engaged to write several of the Lives; which (as we are told,) he, accordingly, performed. He was farther useful, in striking out the jacobitical and tory sentiments, which Shiels had industriously interspersed, wherever he could bring them in:—and, as the success of the work appeared, after all, very doubtful, he was content with twenty-one pounds for his labour, beside a few sets of the books, to disperse among his friends.—Shiels had nearly seventy pounds, beside the advantage of many of the best lives in the work being communicated by friends to the undertaking, and for which Mr. Shiels had the same consideration as for the rest, being paid by the sheet, for the whole.

"As to the alleged design of making the compilement pass for the work of old Mr. Cibber, the charges seem to have been founded on a

somewhat uncharitable construction. We are assured that the thought was not harboured by some of the proprietors, who are still living; and we hope that it did not occur to the first designer of the work, who was also the printer of it, and who bore a respectable character.

"We have been induced to enter thus circumstantially into the foregoing detail of facts, relating to the Lives of the Poets compiled by Messrs. Cibber and Shiels, from a sincere regard to that sacred principle of truth, to which Dr. Johnson so rigidly adhered, according to the best of his knowledge; and which, we believe, no *consideration* would have prevailed on him to violate. In regard to the matter, which we now dismiss, he had, no doubt, been misled by partial and wrong information: Shiels was the Doctor's amanuensis; he had quarrelled with Cibber; it is natural to suppose, that he told his story in his own way; and it is certain that *he* was not "a very sturdy moralist."

Cibber's Lives are not devoid of merit; they communicate some traditionary information; are, in point of style, tolerably correct; and embrace two hundred and thirteen names, from the period of Chaucer, to about the middle of the eighteenth century.

Such were the productions on English Poetic

Biography, before the era of Johnson; and it must be allowed, I think, by every one conversant with the subject, that very little had been done, and that much more was required, in this department.

The immediate origin of our author's "Lives of the Poets" must be ascribed, however, to the booksellers, and has been circumstantially related by Mr. Dilly, in a letter to Mr. Boswell. From this account, it appears that the idea of an invasion of their literary property, by the publication of Martin and Bell's small edition of the Poets, occasioned a meeting of the principal booksellers in London, who agreed to print an accurate and uniform edition of the English Poets, from Chaucer to their own times; and, to secure the utmost respectability to the plan, solicited Dr. Johnson to write a concise narrative of the life of each author. To this the Doctor very readily consented, and, commencing the undertaking in his sixty-eighth year, completed it in his seventy-second, and in the year 1781.

Fortunately for the literary world, our biographer was induced to extend his original design, and, instead of a meagre catalogue of dates, to enter fully into the merits and defects of the productions which fell beneath his notice. So sensible were the proprietors of the great additional

value arising from this deviation, that they voluntarily added one hundred pounds, to the two hundred guineas which the Doctor had demanded.

It has been regretted, however, and, indeed, it is somewhat singular, that the choice of the poets for this publication should have been given to the booksellers. Yet this regret will admit of much abatement, when it is considered, that one of the great prejudices of Johnson, in the execution of his "Lives," has originated from an almost uniform endeavour to depreciate exalted, and to elevate inferior, merit; and that to the number of minor poets, minor in point of quality, which the booksellers have introduced in this collection, the Doctor chose to add the names of *Blackmore*, *Watts*, *Pomfret*, and *Yalden!* It is probable, therefore, that had the selection been left, as assuredly it ought to have been, to the author of the lives, the multitude of poetasters that now encumber the work, would not have been materially diminished. It is surprising, however, that Johnson did not object to this arbitrary conduct of his employers; for that he saw the impropriety and humiliation of such submission, is evident from a passage in his twenty-first Rambler; where, among the anxieties and inconveniences of literature, he enumerates one, as arising from this very cause; "It very often

happens," he says, "that the works of learning, or of wit, are performed at the directions of those by whom they are to be rewarded; the writer has not always the choice of his subject, but is compelled to accept any task which is thrown before him, without much consideration of his own convenience, and without time to prepare himself by previous studies."

It would be still more surprising, if we did not advert to the unhappy tendency just mentioned of our author's mind, that he should not, when we consider the following paragraphs, insist upon the omission of several names which now disgrace his Poets. "The learned," he remarks, "often bewail the loss of ancient writers, whose characters have survived their works; but perhaps, if we could now retrieve them, we should find them only the *Granvilles*, *Montagues*, *Stepneys*, and *Sheffields* of their time, and wonder by what infatuation or caprice they could be raised to notice."—"It cannot, however, be denied, that many have sunk into oblivion, whom it were unjust to number with this *despicable class*."* Surely had Johnson thus spoken of these writers to the patrons of his edition, their instant rejection would necessarily have been the result.

The first intention of the booksellers was, as

* Rambler, No. 106.

we have seen by Mr. Dilly's letter, to commence their catalogue of poets with *Chaucer*. What could have induced them to drop this design, I know not; but the consequence has been, that by opening their collection with *Cowley*, they have passed over several of the noblest poets either of this or any other country; and the public has lost the opportunity of witnessing the great powers of Johnson employed on subjects worthy of their most intense exertion, and where, it is probable, the prejudices which disfigure so many of his modern lives, would have had no room to operate.

Mr. Egerton Brydges, speaking of the first volume of his new edition of Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum, which closes with the year 1603, observes, that in it "are recorded more than one hundred and sixty English poets, who lived previous to the period at which the booksellers instructed Dr. Johnson to commence his celebrated LIVES; and among them are included two names, whom one alone of all their successors can rival. And surely it will not be denied, that they who are unacquainted with the works of the most eminent of those, of whom I have here given an account, must have a very imperfect idea of the compass, of the profuse and copious

fancy, of the energy, and the simplicity of English poetry."*

The range therefore to which Johnson was so unfortunately limited, from *Cowley* to *Lyttelton*, included, with one or two exceptions, only the modern poets, and extended to but fifty-two lives; and yet of these lives, nearly one half may be truly said to have little or no claim, in a poetical light, to distinction. "Nothing," remarks Mr. Godwin, "can be more pernicious than the opinion, which idleness and an incurious temper alone have hitherto sufficed to maintain, that the modern writers of verse in any country, are to be styled the poets of that country. This absurdity was never carried to a greater extreme than in the book entituled *Johnson's Lives of the most Eminent English Poets.* The first Poet in his series is Cowley; and, if the title of his book were properly filled up, it would stand, *Lives of the most Eminent English Poets, from the Decline of Poetry in England, to the time of the Author.* The brilliant and astonishing ages of our poetry are wholly omitted. Milton is the only author in Johnson's series, who can lay claim to a true sublimity of conception, and an inexhaustible

* Preface to his edition of Phillips's Theatrum Poetarum, p. 49.

storehouse of imagery. Pope is an elegant writer, and expresses himself with admirable neatness and compression: Dryden is a man of an ardent and giant mind, who pours out his sentiments in a fervour and tumult of eloquence, and imparts an electricity of pleasure to every reader capable of understanding his excellence. But it is not in Dryden and Pope, in their contemporaries and successors, that we are to look for the peculiar and appropriate features of poetry, for that which separates and distinguishes poetry from every other species of composition. It is Spenser, it is Shakspeare, it is Fletcher, with some of their contemporaries and predecessors, who are our genuine poets, who are the men that an Englishman of a poetical soul would gather round him, when he challenges all the world, and stands up and proudly asks, where, in all the ages of literature and refinement, he is to find their competitors, and their rivals."*

Several of the Lives of Johnson, however, notwithstanding his inveterate political prejudices, and his erroneous estimate of the excellence of poetry, will always be held in high estimation, for their vigour of expression, their occasional acuteness of criticism, the knowledge of

* Godwin's Life of Chaucer, 8vo edition, vol. 1, p. 391, 392, 393.

life which they display, and the pure morality which they ever inculcate. His indiscriminate hatred of Whig principles; his detestation of blank verse; his dislike of pastoral, lyric, and descriptive poetry; his total want of enthusiasm; and his perpetual efforts to veil the splendor of genius, are frequently lost in the admiration which the blaze and vigour of his intellectual powers so strongly excite. This is, in fact, the work in which the excellencies and defects of Johnson are placed before the reader with their full prominence; in which the lovers of philology and biography, the friends of moral and ethic wisdom, will find much to applaud; but in which also the disciples of candour and impartiality, the votaries of creative fancy, and of genuine poetry, will have much to regret, and much to condemn.

The first volume of the "Lives of the English Poets," in Mr. Murphy's edition, contains fourteen names, viz. *Cowley*, *Denham*, *Milton*, *Butler*, *Rochester*, *Roscommon*, *Otway*, *Waller*, *Pomfret*, *Dorset*, *Stepney*, *J. Philips*, *Walsh*, and *Dryden*. Of these, only two, *Milton* and *Dryden*, can claim the appellation of *great* poets; in a secondary class, we may enumerate four, *Cowley*, *Butler*, *Waller*, and *Philips*; but the remaining eight merit no place either in this, or any other *selection*. In making this remark, I must

be understood not to allude to the Dramatic powers of *Otway*, which, in the pathetic, are above all praise.

It is certainly desirable, both to the philologist, and the lover of poetry, to possess a *collection*, in which every poet, who has, in the smallest degree, contributed to the progress of our language, and the improvement of versification, may be included; but a *selection* for *general* use, such as Johnson's was intended to be, should exhibit only our best and most pleasing poets; such, for instance, as display either considerable sublimity, pathos, beauty, or wit. I should be tempted, indeed, in a *selection*, to omit the name of *Cowley*; for though his volumes abound in what, in his days, was deemed wit, a more improved age has discovered it to be worthless and false; neither do I think that much regret would be felt by any reader, if the mythological and insipid love verses of *Waller* had no place in such a work.

Johnson's Life of Cowley, however, is one of his most valuable pieces of biography; and particularly so, for his most able exposure of the absurd mode of writing, to which the poets, at the commencement of the seventeenth century, were so unfortunately addicted; a mode which

happily not long survived the death of Cowley, its last and greatest disciple.

The unconquerable bias, the vehement prejudices which jaundiced the mind of Johnson, are very offensively prominent in his biography of Milton, whose public life he viewed with abhorrence, and whose poetry he professed not to enjoy. He who should judge of the character of Milton from this Life, would conclude him to have been not only unamiable, but that his breast was the seat of the most violent and vindictive passions: he who should look into it for an estimate of his poetical worth, would be told that his "Paradise Lost" is an object of forced admiration; that "it is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again." It is true, that the critique on the "Paradise Lost," is one of the most splendid and eloquent passages in criticism; but the encomium terminates in a sentence which totally destroys the effect of the previous eulogy.

It has been the lot of Milton to encounter implacable enemies, and enthusiastic friends; when probably the mean would have given the true character of the man. In saying this, I allude merely to his political, moral, and domestic conduct; for of his poetical excellence, no encomium

can be sufficiently expressive. What a harsh, what a gloomy and ferocious tinting, has Johnson given to his portrait of Milton, in the two following paragraphs! it would seem rather intended for a delineation of the "arch apostate" of the poet.

"Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of controul, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the state, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected, that his predominant desire was to destroy, rather than establish; and that he felt not so much the love of liberty, as repugnance to authority.

"It has been observed, that they who most loudly clamour for liberty, do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domestick relations, is, that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books, something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought women made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion."

A more striking contrast to this dark and hostile colouring, cannot be produced than from the pages of the very last biographer of our great poet, who concludes his bold and ardent delineation in the subsequent terms:

"We have now completed the history of JOHN MILTON,—a man in whom were illustriously combined all the qualities that could adorn, or could elevate the nature to which he belonged;—a man, who at once possessed beauty of countenance, symmetry of form, elegance of manners, benevolence of temper, magnanimity and loftiness of soul, the brightest illumination of intellect, knowledge the most various and extended, virtue that never loitered in her career, nor deviated from her course;—a man, who, if he had been delegated as the representative of his species to one of the superior worlds, would have suggested a grand idea of the human race, as of beings affluent in moral and intellectual treasure—raised and distinguished in the universe, as the favourites and heirs of heaven."*

I cannot here forbear inserting the very glowing and highly-finished tribute which Dr. Symmons has paid to the poems of Milton; a tribute from which no true critic, however free from enthusiasm, would wish to subduct an atom:

* Symmons's Life of Milton, p. 526, 527.

"Their reputation," says he, "seems to be still increasing; and we may venture to predict, that it will yet increase, till some of those great vicissitudes, to which all that is human is perpetually exposed, and which all must eventually experience, shall blot out our name and our language, and bury us in barbarism. But even amid the ruins of Britain, Milton will survive: Europe will preserve one portion of him; and his native strains will be cherished in the expanding bosom of the great queen of the Atlantic, when his own London may present the spectacle of Thebes, and his Thames roll a silent and solitary stream through heaps of blended desolation."*

The Lives of Milton and Dryden fully develope Johnson's confined taste in poetry; he has declared of *Lycidas*, that "surely no man could have fancied that he read it with pleasure, had he not known the author;" and he has termed *Comus* "inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive." Dryden's very indifferent poem on the death of Mrs. Killigrew, he has been pleased to call "the noblest ode that our language ever has produced;" while the FABLES, the most perfect and poetical production of the bard, he has scarcely condescended to notice! In short, the Doctor limited his ideas of excellence in poetry,

* Life of Milton, p. 81.

to ratiocination in harmonious numbers, a limitation which has led him into manifold acts of injustice to the most exalted of our poets.

The *second* volume of Johnson's Lives, or the *tenth* of Murphy's edition, embraces twenty-two poets, viz. *Smith*, *Duke*, *King*, *Sprat*, *Halifax*, *Parnell*, *Garth*, *Rowe*, *Addison*, *Hughes*, *Sheffield*, *Prior*, *Congreve*, *Blackmore*, *Fenton*, *Gay*, *Granville*, *Yalden*, *Tickell*, *Hammond*, *Somerville*, and *Savage*; and yet how few among this list of names merit to be rescued from oblivion, as writers of miscellaneous poetry! Rowe and Congreve have obtained their fame entirely in another sphere; and when we have enumerated *Parnell*, *Addison*, and *Prior*, *Gay*, *Tickell*, and *Somerville*, all that should be found in the pages of a *selection* will have been taken from the croud. The *Dispensary* of *Garth*, as a local and satiric poem, has enjoyed its day, but is now little capable, from any intrinsic merit, of affording either pleasure or instruction.

These twenty-two Lives are written, in general, with sufficient impartiality, or freedom from prejudice; those of Addison and Savage are the best; and the latter, as we have already observed, a master-piece of biography.

The succeeding volume of the Poets, however, again presents us with marked specimens of our

author's want of judgment, taste, and candour. It includes sixteen bards; *Swift*, *Broome*, *Pope*, *Pitt*, *Thomson*, *Watts*, *A. Philips*, *West*, *Collins*, *Dyer*, *Shenstone*, *Young*, *Mallet*, *Akenside*, *Gray*, and *Lyttelton*. Of these, eight might be spared, namely, *Swift*, *Broome*, *Pitt*, *Watts*, *Philips*, *West*, *Mallet*, and *Lyttelton*. In the bulky verses of Swift, there is nothing that can touch the heart, or exalt the imagination; they are, for the most part, either trifling, or disgustingly indelicate; and what merit they possess, arises chiefly from the simplicity and ease of the language and versification.

Of the poets whom we wish to omit, either in this or the preceding volumes, all that is truly valuable might be condensed in a couple of duodecimos; for instance, from the eight writers just rejected, not more than half a dozen short poems would be required, and among these, the Ballads of Mallet, and the Monody of Lyttelton.

To the genius of *Pope*, of *Thomson*, and of *Young*, Dr. Johnson has done ample justice; the parallel between Pope and Dryden, and the poetical characters of Thomson and Young, are written with the utmost felicity of language and imagery. It is highly to be lamented, that with several other very eminent poets in this volume, he has pursued a very different plan; to *Collins*,

to *Dyer*, to *Shenstone*, to *Akenside*, and *Gray*, he has dealt forth little more than indiscriminate censure; while his criticism on the odes of Gray descends to absolute puerility.

With all the faults, however, which we have pointed out in the critical biography of Johnson, his *Lives* must nevertheless be esteemed, for their frequent acuteness and vigour, a work truly great and splendid. It may, indeed, be said, that what chaff there is in them is so gross, so soon discovered, and so easily separable from the wheat, that little trouble is required, and the grain, when thus cleansed, is of so pure and fine a texture, as richly to compensate the labour of sifting; to drop the metaphor, whatever injury the apathy and prejudice of Johnson might, during his lifetime, and the prevalence of his popularity, inflict, has been since completely obliterated, by a calm and dispassionate public, which, naturally inclined to take part with the oppressed, has fostered with peculiar favour the objects of our author's critical persecution.

The very defective catalogue of poets, to which Johnson, through the direction of the proprietors of his edition, was unfortunately limited, induced some enterprising booksellers at Edinburgh to publish, in the year 1792, a collection upon a much more comprehensive plan. In this edition,

which now extends to fourteen volumes, large octavo, printed in double columns, and in a very small type, the biographical and critical prefaces are the composition of Robert Anderson, M. D. and place his talents for the undertaking in a most respectable light. I cannot avoid wishing, however, that, since this publication was intended as a more complete and *general* collection of British Poets than had hitherto been printed, it was not more extensive, embracing the old Scotch, as well as more of the old English, bards. It contains, however, one hundred and fourteen authors, and is carried down nearly to the year 1795, at which period the thirteenth volume closed.

Of this copious *collection*, eleven volumes are devoted to the original poets;

Vol. 1, *contains*

Chaucer.	Carew.	Davenant.
Wyat.	Suckling.	5.
Surrey.	4.	Milton.
Sackville.	Donne.	Cowley.
2.	Daniel.	Waller.
Spenser.	Browne.	Butler.
Shakspeare.	Fletcher, P.	Denham.
Davies.	Fletcher, G.	6.
Hall.	Jonson.	Dryden.
3.	Drummond.	Rochester.
Drayton.	Crashaw.	Roscommon.

Otway.
Pomfret.
Stepney.
Philips, J.
Walsh.
Smith.
Duke.
King.
Sprat.
Halifax.

7.

Parnell.
Garth.
Rowe.
Addison.
Hughes.
Sheffield.
Prior.
Congreve.
Blackmore.
Fenton.
Granville.
Yalden.

8.

Pope.
Gay.
Tickell.
Somerville.
Pattison.
Hammond.
Savage.
Hill.
Broome.
Pitt.
Blair.

9.

Swift.
Thomson.
Watts.
Hamilton.
Philips, A.
West, G.
Collins.
Dyer.
Shenstone.
Mallet.
Akenside.
Harte.

10.

Young.
Gray.
West, R.
Lyttelton.
Moore.
Boyse.
Thompson.
Cawthorne.
Churchill.
Falconer.
Lloyd.
Cunningham.
Green.
Cooper.
Goldsmith.
Whitehead, P.
Brown.
Shaw.
Armstrong.

11.

Wilkie.
Langhorne.
Scott.
Dodsley.
Chatterton.
Bruce.
Græme.
Glover.
Jago.
Grainger.
Smart.
Penrose.
Mickle.
Johnson.
Whitehead, W.

Jenyns. Lovibond. Blacklock.
Logan. Cotton.
Warton, T. Smollet.

To have rendered this edition an entire body of British Poetry, still a *desideratum* to the philologer and critical reader of poetry, the following names should have been included; *Langland, Barbour, Gower, Lydgate, James I. Barclay, Hawes, Dunbar, Douglas, Lyndsay, Skelton, Maitland, Montgomery, Churchyard, Tusser, Gascoign, Marlowe, Turberville, Sydney, Watson, Warner, Southwell, Raleigh, Quarles, H. King, Herrick, Marvell, Oldham.*

In a still greater degree, however, is a *selection* wanted, which shall comprehend all the truly genuine and first-rate British poetry, of ancient and modern times, omitting all that has, or approaches to, the stamp of mediocrity. We have seen that Johnson, having left out a very large portion of our best poetry, has, in obedience to the mandate of his employers, crouded his pages with poetasters of the lowest order; and subsequent editors have been but too much inclined to pursue a similar track.

In presenting my readers with the following list for a *selection*, I have excluded all *dramatic*, and all *living* authors. I have, likewise, arranged my poets in three classes; in the first of which I

have, for the only time, I believe, in a collection of poetry, introduced the name of DUNBAR, a poet, in language and versification superior, in imagery, force of imagination, and humour equal, to CHAUCER. Entertaining the idea, that mere wit, and satire, are, in the scale of excellence, far inferior to sublimity and pathos, I have placed Butler and Prior, Gay and Green, Churchill and Anstey, in the third class. A fourth might be formed, which would be very productive in point of names, but would include a large mass of common-place matter; instead, therefore, of printing the entire works of these poets, I would preserve their very best parts, and form six volumes of them, as an elegant appendix to the edition.

I am conscious, that, as much depends upon individual association, and consequent peculiarity of taste, several objections may be made to this, as to every other arrangement; yet the first class, I think, will not require much revision, whatever may be thought of the second and third.

FIRST CLASS.

Chaucer.	Dryden.	Young.	Cowper.
Dunbar.*	Pope.	Gray.	
Spenser.	Thomson.	Chatterton.	
Milton.	Collins.	Burns.	

* No complete or good edition of the works of this

SECOND CLASS.

Sackville.	Warton, Tho.	Hole.
Glover.	Smollet.	Beattie.
Akenside.	Grainger.	White, Kirke.
Dyer.	Mason.	Moore, Henry.
Johnson.	Jones, Sir Wm.	Hurdis.
Goldsmith.	Darwin.	

THIRD CLASS.

Surrey.	Philips, John.	Gay.
Drummond.	Parnell.	Tickell.
Butler.	Prior.	Somerville.

great poet, I believe, exists. "Humour, description, allegory," says Mr. Pinkerton, "great poetical genius, and a vast wealth of words, all unite to form the complexion of Dunbar's poetry. He unites in himself, and generally surpasses, the qualities of the chief old English poets; the morals and satire of Langland; Chaucer's humour, poetry, and knowledge of life; the allegory of Gower; the description of Lydgate.

"The pieces of Dunbar, now published, would, with those formerly in print, make a considerable volume; and I hope to be able, in time, to give a correct edition of *The Works of William Dunbar.*" Ancient Scotish Poems, vol. 1, p. 94.

This edition, however, has not yet appeared. The tale published by Mr. Pinkerton, in these volumes, and entituled *The Freirs of Berwik, supposit To Be Writtin Be Dunbar,* is one of the best contrived and most humorous narratives which I have ever read. It has been imitated, but in a very inferior manner, by Allan Ramsay.

Shenstone.	Green.	Mickle.
Blair.	Bruce.	Anstey.
Churchill.	Shaw.	Day.
Armstrong.	Langhorne.	Warton, Joseph.
Falconer.	Scott.	Smith, Charlotte.
Smart.	Penrose.	Mercer.

To this *selection*, which includes fifty-seven poets, the *appendix*, to complete the design, might be drawn from the following authors; and, should the specimens be chosen with taste, a very elegant and interesting miscellany would be formed.

Douglas.	Waller.	Lloyd.
Gascoigne.	Addison.	Cunningham
Sydney.	Fenton.	Ferguson.
Warner.	Hammond.	Cooper.
Southwell.	Swift.	The two White-
Raleigh.	Hamilton.	heads.
Drayton.	Philips, Ambr.	Brown, Moses.
Carew.	The two Wests.	Dodsley.
Herrick.	Mallet.	Græme.
Suckling.	Lyttelton.	Jago.
Browne.	Moore, Edward.	Jenyns.
Fletcher, Phin.	Thompson.	Logan.
Fletcher, Giles.	Cawthorn.	Lovibond.
Jonson.	Ramsay.	Cotton.
Cowley.		

In the arrangement which I have now given,

only seventeen of the fifty-two poets, in Johnson's edition, are admitted, and forty new names are added. There are, also, seventeen authors, not to be found in the collection of Anderson.

The effect of the critical biography of Johnson on the literary world, and on the public at large, has been very considerable, and, in many respects, beneficial. It has excited a laudable attention to preserve the memory of those, who have, by intellectual exertions, contributed to our instruction and amusement; whereas, previous to the appearance of our author's "Lives," biography, with few exceptions, had been confined to military and political characters; it has given rise, also, to much discussion and research into the merits and defects of our national poets; and the edition to which it was annexed, has led the way to several subsequent collections on an improved and more extended scale. Among these, the editions superintended by *Dr. Aikin* and *Mr. Park*, have much claim to distinction.

With the "Lives of the Poets," Johnson terminated his literary career; but, as some posthumous writings have been, on indisputable authority, ascribed to him, it will be expedient to consider them in this place.

The publication of two volumes octavo, in the year 1788, with the subsequent title, "LETTERS

to and from the late SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D. To which are added SOME POEMS, never before printed. Published from the original MSS. in her possession, By HESTER LYNCH PIOZZI," brings our author to view as an EPISTOLARY WRITER.

This correspondence, which is chiefly carried on between the Doctor and Mrs. Thrale, (afterwards Piozzi,) commences in the year 1765, and only terminated with the death of the former.

From the general style of his writings, it was not to be expected that Johnson would excel in the structure of a familiar letter, a species of composition which requires so much unaffected ease and simplicity. The reader of this collection will, however, be agreeably surprised in the discovery, that, although the style be still indicative of the master's hand, it is apparently unlaboured, free, pure, and flowing. As hath been well observed by Mrs. Piozzi, " the good taste by which our countrymen are distinguished, will lead them to prefer the native thoughts, and unstudied phrases, scattered over these pages, to the more laboured elegance of his other works—as bees have been observed to reject roses, and fix upon the wild fragrance of a neighbouring heath."*

How accurately he could appretiate the mode

* Preface to the Letters, p. 4. and 5.

in which a confidential letter should be written, will fully appear from the following epistle to Mrs. Thrale, dated Lichfield, October 27, 1777.

"Dear Madam,

"You talk of writing and writing, as if you had all the writing to yourself. If our correspondence were printed, I am sure posterity, for posterity is always the author's favourite, would say that I am a good writer too.—*Anch'io sono pittore.* To sit down so often with nothing to say; to say something so often, almost without consciousness of saying, and without any remembrance of having said, is a power of which I will not violate my modesty by boasting, but I do not believe that every body has it.

"Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection; some are wise and sententious; some strain their powers for efforts of gaiety; some write news, and some write secrets; but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gaiety, without news, and without a secret, is, doubtless, the great epistolick art.

"In a man's letters, you know, Madam, his soul lies naked; his letters are only the mirrour of his breast;' whatever passes within him, is shown undisguised in its natural process; nothing is inverted, nothing distorted; you see systems in

their elements; you discover actions in their motives.

"Of this great truth, sounded by the knowing to the ignorant, and so echoed by the ignorant to the knowing, what evidence have you now before you! Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do not you see me reduced to my first principles? This is the pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where doubt and distrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought. The original idea is laid down in its simple purity, and all the supervenient conceptions are spread over it *stratum super stratum*, as they happen to be formed. These are the letters, by which souls are united, and by which minds, naturally in unison, move each other as they are moved themselves. I know, dearest lady, that in the perusal of this, such is the consanguinity of our intellects, you will be touched as I am touched. I have indeed concealed nothing from you, nor do I expect ever to repent of having thus opened my heart.

"I am, &c."

In fact, the Letters of Johnson place him before us stript of all disguise; they teach us to love as well as to admire the man, and are frequently written with a pathos and an ardour of affection which impress us with a much more amiable idea

of the writer than can be drawn from any portion of his more elaborated works. I greatly regret, that of the multitude of letters which our author is known to have written, only those preserved by Mrs. Piozzi, and a few scattered through the biography of Boswell, can now be subjected to our perusal.

It has been remarked by many writers, and, among the rest, by Johnson, though, I think, without any just foundation, that this country is not distinguished by excellence in epistolary composition. "It has happened," he observes, "that among the numerous writers which our nation has produced, equal, perhaps, always in force and genius, and, of late, in elegancy and accuracy, to those of any other country, very few have endeavoured to distinguish themselves by the publication of letters, except such as were written in the discharge of publick trusts, and during the transaction of great affairs; which, though they afford precedents to the minister, and memorials to the historian, are of no use as examples of the familiar style, or models of private correspondence."*

At the period when this was written, we were in possession of the Letters of *Lady Russel*, *Pope*, *Swift*, and *Lady Wortley Montague*; and though,

* Rambler, No. 152.

probably, the productions of the two ladies, when separately considered, do not rival those of the celebrated *Marchioness de Sevigné*; yet it may be said with truth, that the letters of Russel exhibit the tenderness of the amiable French woman, and those of Montague her vivacity and ease. Many of the letters of *Pope* have been injured by elaboration, and the affectation of wit; but there are several in the collection which are free from these defects, and are truly valuable for their spirit, and elegant simplicity. The letters of *Swift*, too, are remarkable for their freedom and perspicuity.

To invalidate the opinion of Johnson, the production of these writers would be sufficient; but it is to some authors of very late date, that we must appeal for the complete triumph of this country in epistolary composition. The names of *Gray*, of *Burns*, and *Cowper*, will call to our recollection, a series of epistles, which have no superiors in modern Europe. With the letters of Burns and Cowper, indeed, I know none, that for ease and spirit, for sweetness and simplicity, both in style and matter, can be placed in competition.

The remaining posthumous works of Dr. Johnson, namely, *Sermons on different subjects, left for publication by John Taylor, LL. D. and published*

by the Rev. Samuel Hayes, A. M. two volumes octavo; and *Prayers and Meditations, published from his manuscripts, by George Strahan, A. M.* call upon us for the consideration of our author, under the character of a THEOLOGIAN.

To these publications, in this department, we may likewise add several religious papers in the Rambler, and three reviews, in the Literary Magazine, of *Sir Isaac Newton's Arguments in proof of a Deity;* of *Brown's Christian Morals;* and of *Jenyns's Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil.* The critique on Jenyns's Enquiry is a most masterly disquisition, on a subject of great metaphysical obscurity, and a complete refutation and exposure of the weak and arrogant parts of that singular production.

The Sermons, which are twenty-five in number, were part of the stock which Dr. Taylor carried with him to the pulpit. As compositions, they are little inferior to any of our author's best works, and they inculcate, without enthusiasm or dogmatism, the purest precepts and doctrines of religion and morality. The last of the second volume was written for the funeral of his wife, and under the expectation of its being delivered by Dr. Taylor, who refused the office, declaring, that he thought it too laudatory for the occasion; an opinion, to which, probably, few of its readers will

assent; for there is nothing of unqualified praise in this discourse, and it is, more than any other sermon in the collection, remarkable for its solemn and pathetic tone; it was written, indeed, between the death and burial of Mrs. Johnson, and therefore with a warmth of feeling, and a fervour of devotion, which a loss so great and recent might be expected to impress.

From our author's acknowledgement to Mr. Boswell, it appears that he had written various sermons beside these presented to Taylor; and much is it to be wished, from the value of those which we possess, that the remainder, if still existing in manuscript, were delivered to the press.

It is in the *Prayers and Meditations* of Johnson, however, that we become acquainted with the inward heart of the man; he had left them for publication, under the idea that they were calculated to do good; and depraved, indeed, must be that individual, who rises unbenefited from their perusal.

The contrast between the languags of this little volume, and the style of the Rambler, is striking in the extreme, and a strong proof of the judgement, the humility, and the piety of the author. With a deep sense of human frailty, and individual error, he addresses the throne of mercy in a strain remarkable for its simplicity and

plainness; but which, though totally stripped of the decorations of art, possesses a native dignity, approaching to that which we receive from our most excellent liturgy. The first prayer which he has preserved, is dated September 10th, 1738, and the last, December 5th, 1784, eight days previous to his decease.

The "Meditations" connected with these Prayers correspond not with the title; they are, in fact, little more than *memoranda*, and I wish that many of them had been spared. They reveal, however, the workings of his mind, his fears, his apprehensions, and his sorrows; they reveal also, what no human being is exempt from, many singular weaknesses; but, as Mr. Murphy has justly observed, "they are the weaknesses of a good, a pious, and a most excellent man."

To enter somewhat further, however, into the theological opinions of Johnson, it will be necessary to take a cursory review of his *tenets*, his *superstitions*, and his *piety*.

He was, with some few speculative differences, an orthodox churchman; but with a zeal perhaps rather too ardent,* and with an inclination towards the Roman Catholic religion. His belief in the doctrines and statement of the Trinity,† the

* Vide Boswell's Life, vol. 1, p. 420.

† Ibid. Vol. 2, p. 256.

resurrection,* and vicarious punishments,† were strictly conformable to the protestant creed. He possessed, nevertheless, too much depth and originality of reasoning, to submit implicitly to the dictates of any church, where human opinion was mingled with divine revelation; on subjects of this kind, however, he was never dogmatic, but communicated his ideas with awe and hesitation.‡

His deviations from rigid protestantism, owe their origin chiefly to his love of the marvellous and mysterious, to his gloomy apprehensions relative to a future state, to his longing wish to know with more certainty, the condition of the dead hereafter, and to his ardent desire of more extrinsic assistance toward the obtainment of salvation. To this latter circumstance, we are principally to attribute his bias to the church of Rome. "A good man," he has declared, "of a timorous disposition, in great doubt of his acceptance with God, and pretty credulous, might be glad to be of a church where there are so many *helps* to get to heaven. *I would be a Papist if I could.* I have fear enough; but an obstinate rationality prevents me. I shall never be a Papist, unless on the near approach of death, of

* Boswell's Life, Vol. 4, 96. † Vol. 4, 127.

‡ See his opinion on the eternity of punishment. Boswell, vol. 3, p. 216.

which I have a very great terror." * His fears of death, or rather of the consequences which might result from it, appear to have been morbidly great; "he never," he told Mr. Boswell, "had a moment in which death was not terrible to him." † To be confident of acceptance hereafter, would certainly be presumption; but such a horror of futurity as Johnson entertained, was, let us hope, never, in a state of perfect sanity, known to haunt the mind but of enormous guilt; and was, assuredly, in our great moralist, not the consequence of moral turpitude, but of organic infirmity.

The idea of preserving a mysterious communication with, and exerting some influence over the destiny of the departed, was cherished by Johnson with a species of awful delight. Hence his inclination to the doctrine of purgatory, and his belief in the utility of prayers for the dead. It was highly consolatory to him, to suppose that a kind of spiritual intercourse might be permitted between the beings of this world and its former inhabitants; and it is evident, from his devotions, and occasional conversation, that he conceived a mutual influence to exist between himself and the spirit of his departed wife. Shortly after the

* Boswell's Life, vol. 4, p. 304.

† Boswell's Life, vol. 3, p. 167.

death of Mrs. Johnson, he commenced the habit of recommending her to mercy in his prayers; but always with a clause, which exhibits proof of doubt in the propriety of the custom. "O Lord, *so far as it may be lawful for me*, I commend to thy fatherly goodness, *the soul of my departed wife;* beseeching thee to grant her whatever is best in her *present state*, and *finally to receive her to eternal happiness.*" * That he believed the benefit of intercession might be mutual, appears from the following memorandum in his diary. "This is the day on which, in 1752, dear Tetty died. I have now uttered a prayer of repentance and contrition; *perhaps Tetty knows that I prayed for her. Perhaps Tetty is now praying for me.* God help me."

From these passages, it would seem that an intermediate state, a state appropriated to amelioration between death and final judgement, formed part of the creed of Johnson; a quotation from his Life by Boswell, will place his opinion of this doctrine in a clearer light. BOSWELL. "What do you think, Sir, of purgatory, as believed by the Roman Catholicks?" JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, it is a very harmless doctrine. They are of opinion, that the generality of mankind are neither so obstinately wicked as to deserve ever-

* Prayers and Meditations, p. 14, 15, edition of 1806.

lasting punishment, nor so good as to merit being admitted into the society of blessed spirits; and therefore that God is graciously pleased to allow of a middle state, where they may be purified by certain degrees of suffering. You see, Sir, there is nothing unreasonable in this." BOSWELL. "But then, Sir, their masses for the dead." JOHNSON. "Why, Sir, if it be once established, that there are souls in purgatory, it is as proper to pray for *them*, as for our brethren of mankind who are yet in this life." *

The same turn of mind which led him to the adoption of a belief in purgatory, induced him to give too much credence, perhaps, to the probability of the re-appearance of the departed. It was his earnest wish to see, and to commune with, some being who had passed the limits of terrestrial life, who was granted to re-visit the light of day, and to dissipate some portion of that hitherto impenetrable gloom, which shrouds the secrets of the world to come. In his *Rasselas*, he first explicitly gave his opinion on this mysterious subject: "that the dead are seen no more," he remarks, "I will not undertake to maintain, against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages, and of all nations. There is no people, rude or unlearned, among whom

* Vol. 2, p. 98.

apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which perhaps prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth: those that never heard of one another, would not have agreed in a tale, which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers, can very little weaken the general evidence; and some who deny it with their tongues, confess it by their fears."* This bias towards a belief in supernatural agency, he indulged to the latest period of his life; in 1778, when talking with Miss Seward on the supposed appearance of a spectre to Mr. John Wesley, he exclaimed, "Madam, this is a question, which, after five thousand years, is yet undecided; a question, whether in theology or philosophy, one of the most important that can come before the human understanding:"† and in 1781, he observed to Mrs. Hall, that "a total disbelief of apparitions, is adverse to the opinion of the existence of the soul between death and the last day."‡

The comprehensive creed of Johnson, with regard to spiritual agency, embraced likewise the doctrine of demoniacal influence, and the now

* Rasselas, chap. 30.

† Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. 3, p. 318.

‡ Boswell's Life, vol. 4, p. 96.

obsolete superstition of Witchcraft. In addition to the passage on Johnson's belief of the existence of witches, quoted from Mr. Boswell in page 291. of this volume, we have to relate, that at a party in Edinburgh, where witchcraft was again introduced, "Mr. Crosbie said, he thought it the greatest blasphemy to suppose evil spirits counteracting the Deity, and raising storms, for instance, to destroy his creatures.—Johnson. "Why, sir, if moral evil be consistent with the government of the Deity, why may not physical evil be also consistent with it? It is not more strange that there should be evil spirits, than evil men: evil unembodied spirits, than evil embodied spirits. And as to storms, we know there are such things; and it is no worse that evil spirits raise them, than that they rise."—Crosbie. "But it is not credible, that witches should have effected what they are said in stories to have done."—Johnson. "Sir, I am not defending their credibility. I am only saying, that your arguments are not good, and will not overturn the belief of witchcraft.—(Dr. Ferguson said to me, (Mr. Boswell) aside, 'He is right.') And then, sir, you have all mankind, rude and civilized, agreeing in the belief of the agency of preternatural powers. You must take evidence: you must consider, that wise and great men have

condemned witches to die."—Crosbie. "But an act of parliament put an end to witchcraft."—Johnson. No, sir, witchcraft had ceased, and therefore an act of parliament was passed to prevent persecution for what was not witchcraft. Why it ceased we cannot tell, as we cannot tell the reason of many other things." *

The principal argument of Dr. Johnson for the existence of witchcraft and spectral appearances is taken, we perceive, from the universality of opinion in their favour; a mode of arguing, however, which is as likely to protect error as to enforce truth. What Dr. Aikin has advanced upon this very subject, in his Letters to his Son, appears to me so cogent and satisfactory, that I shall beg leave to present a considerable portion of it to my readers.

"That a great part of mankind," he remarks, "agree in giving credit to a thing, even though it be somewhat which comes under their personal observation, will be a very slight argument of its truth, provided there be a manifest source of error in the case, which is of a nature to operate equally upon all. Thus, the once universal and still common notion, that the earth is stationary, while the sun and other luminaries move round

* Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, 3d edition, p. 33, 34.

it, is not in the least strengthened by the *numbers* who adopt it, since all have formed their belief upon the very same testimony, that of their senses, which is liable to the same error in all as in one. The same may be asserted of the supposition of a supernatural voice speaking in thunder; of lightning being the weapon of an angry Deity; of the place of future punishment being a dark cavern under ground; and of various other opinions, in which uniform associations of ideas have occasioned uniform deductions. —To apply this principle in the present case. When mankind, from whatever causes, had admitted the belief of a state of existence continued beyond the present life, they must have endeavoured to form some conception of the *mode* of that existence. Now, as the *body* lay before their eyes, a lifeless mass, or was destroyed by fire, corruption, or other material agents, they must necessarily have had recourse to some substance of a rarer and subtler texture, which, escaping from this gross and perishable part, might carry with it such impressed marks and qualities, as would preserve the stamp of personal identity. How metaphysical soever this process of thinking may appear, it must actually have been gone through by the rudest people, if they thought at all on the subject. Further; that *form* and

figure were capable of being impressed upon matter of much greater tenuity than their own bodies, they must experimentally have known, from the familiar instances of *shadows*, and the *reflexion* of their image from water or mirrors. In these cases they would plainly perceive, that a *something*, resembling themselves, might, in some measure, stand apart from their bodies.

" Thus, I conceive, it almost necessarily happened, that all nations formed similar ideas of the corporeal attributes of those who had passed through death without total extinction of being. It was no longer gross body in which they were clad:—that, it was manifest, was left behind. But as, in thinking of the dead, it was impossible to abstract from them shape, lineaments, looks, and gestures, these properties were annexed to a thin, airy, or shadowy body, which, while it might be an object of *sight*, and perhaps of *hearing*, was none to the *touch*.—

" This uniformity of conception respecting men in another state of existence being established, it is, I imagine, an easy step to the supposition of their sensible appearance under such a form. Reveries and dreams of the fancy in persons of heated imaginations, are so extremely like realities, that they are readily taken for such. A mourning mother, filled with the vivid image of

her lost child, might easily, in the dark and silent hours of night, when just sinking into disturbed slumber, imagine that the beloved form actually stood before her. The long-revered face of an aged parent, might be fancied to clothe itself in a visible garb of light, in order to console, admonish, or inform the troubled and solitary child. Still more readily, the murderer, appalled by conscious guilt, and in continual dread of an avenger, might body forth the mangled corpse of the slain, to upbraid him with terrific looks and gestures for the bloody deed. All this appears to me so perfectly natural, and so correspondent to the universal history of the human mind, that I only wonder so *few* persons, among those who are thoroughly persuaded of the reality of apparitions, can be met with, who pretend themselves to have been witnesses of them. And surely, the gradual diminution of these supposed events, now amounting in enlightened countries almost to a total cessation, is a much stronger argument against them, than the most general concurrence in their belief among ignorant and credulous people, can be in their favour.

> In the deep windings of the grove, no more
> The hag obscene, and grisly phantom dwell
> Nor in the fall of mountain-stream, or roar
> Of winds, is heard the angry spirit's yell;
> No wizard mutters the tremendous spell,

Nor sinks convulsive in prophetic swoon;
Nor bids the noise of drums and trumpets swell,
To ease of fancied pangs the labouring moon,
Or chase the shade that blots the blazing orb of noon.
Minstrel.

"Of the various superstitions which the poet here represents as put to flight by Reason, some have been nearly as universal as the belief of apparitions of the dead; yet it will not, surely, be now asserted of them, that they have 'become universal by their truth.'*"

Whatever may be thought of the speculative reveries of Johnson with regard to immaterial agency, there can be but one opinion as to his piety, sincerity, and, in the privacy of prayer, his thorough humility and contrition. He had a perpetual struggle against morbid sensation, constitutional indolence, and strong appetites; and how well he succeeded in the contest must be apparent to all who shall view his life in the pages of Mr. Boswell, or open his Prayers and Meditations; if not a happy, he was, assuredly, a truly good and pious, man.†

We have now closed the literary career of Johnson, and have only to record the few remain-

* Vol. 1, Letter 25.

† For instances of his extraordinary piety, see Boswell's Life, vol. 2, p. 44 and 212; vol. 3, p. 100 and 101; and vol. 4, p. 400 and 425.

ing events which preceded his fast approaching dissolution. They distinguish a period of suffering and of sorrow, in which, in rapid succession, he lost many of his old and most valued friends. Scarcely had he finished his "Lives of the Poets" when death deprived him of Mr. Thrale, an event which he has thus pathetically related. "On Wednesday, "May" 11, "1781," was buried my dear friend Thrale, who died on Wednesday 4; and with him were buried many of my hopes and pleasures. About five, I think, on Wednesday morning he expired; I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect or benignity. Farewel. May God, that delighteth in mercy, have mercy on thee!

"I had constantly prayed for him sometime before his death.

"The decease of him, from whose friendship I had obtained many opportunities of amusement, and to whom I turned my thoughts as to a refuge from misfortunes, has left me heavy. But my business is with myself.

"My first knowledge of Thrale was in 1765. I enjoyed his favour for almost a fourth part of my life.*"

* Prayers and Meditations, p. 159, 160.

The year succeeding the decease of Mr. Thrale, brought with it a deprivation almost as great as he had experienced from the loss of that worthy man. On January 17th, 1782, about seven in the morning, died, by an almost instantaneous death, his old and faithful friend Levett. The verses with which he has honoured his memory will, as long as the language in which they are written shall endure, best speak the grateful tenderness, the durable affection of our author's heart.

At Streatham Johnson soon perceived that he was no longer welcomed with the cordiality to which he had formerly been accustomed; his visits, therefore, were less frequent, and on the 6th of October of this year, he took a final leave of this once hospitable villa and its inhabitants. His correspondence, however, with Mrs. Thrale did not cease until July the 8th, 1784; a few days before which date she had become, much against his wishes and advice, Mrs. Piozzi. "What you have done," he says in his farewell epistle, "however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me: I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

"I wish that God may grant you every blessing; that you may be happy in this world for its

short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.—

—"The tears stand in my eyes."*

In the mean time disease had pressed heavily upon his frame; besides an asthmatic complaint for which he had been bled frequently, he was occasionally afflicted with the gout, endured for some months considerable pain from a sarcocele, and on the 17th of June, 1783, suffered a paralytick stroke, which for some hours deprived him of his powers of speech. From these formidable attacks, however, such was the strength of his constitution, he rapidly recovered. A few months annihilated all traces of the palsy, the sarcocele disappeared without an operation, and the gout and asthma, though not entirely removed, were greatly mitigated.

In consequence of this amendment he was able to partake of the advantages of change of air, and made tours into Kent and Wiltshire, on visits to his friends Mr. Langton and Mr. Bowles. It was during his residence at the house of Mr. Bowles that he was informed, by Dr. Brocklesby, of the death of Mrs. Williams, a loss which he

* Johnson's Letters, vol. 2, p. 375, 376.

now more severely felt, as she was the last but one of his domestic companions.

To console himself for these home deprivations, he instituted early in December, 1783, a new Evening Club at the Essex Head, in Essex-street, the master of which was an old servant of Mr. Thrale's. The members met thrice a week, and the absentees forfeited three-pence per night. His returning complaints, however, precluded much enjoyment from this social plan; towards the end of the year he was seized with a most violent fit of spasmodic asthma, which was soon followed by dropsical swellings of his legs and thighs, that encreased rapidly, but suddenly subsided in the February following, in consequence of a most profuse and unexpected evacuation.

After this fortunate event he again rallied, and during the summer of 1784 visited Oxford, Lichfield, and Birmingham. He had also entertained a wish, from the hope of assistance in warmth of climate, to visit Italy; an inclination in which he was not only supported, but even anticipated, by the kindness of his friends, who, considering his pension as not adequate to the expenses incident to such a journey, had applied to the minister through the medium of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, for an augmentation of two hundred pounds per annum. The Chancellor

exerted himself to the utmost in the affair, but without success; and, on its failure, generously came forward to supply Johnson with a loan of five hundred pounds; this, together with an offer of an hundred per annum, during his Italian Tour, from his amiable physician, Dr. Brocklesby, he declined. Of his gratitude, however, for the zeal and affection of his friends, the letter which he wrote to the Chancellor, and the following passage from Mr. Boswell, just after the application had been made, are striking proofs.

Boswell. "I am very anxious about you, sir, and particularly that you should go to Italy for the winter, which I believe is your own wish." Johnson. "It is, sir." Boswell. "You have no objection, I presume, but the money it would require." Johnson. "Why, no, sir."—Upon which I gave him a particular account of what had been done, and read to him the Lord Chancellor's letter.—He listened with much attention; then warmly said, "this is taking prodigious pains about a man."—"O! sir, (said I, with most sincere affection,) your friends would do every thing for you. He paused,—grew more and more agitated,—till tears started into his eyes, and he exclaimed with fervent emotion, "God bless you all." I was so affected that I also shed tears.—After a short silence, he renewed and extended

his grateful benediction, "God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake." We both remained for some time unable to speak.—He rose suddenly and quitted the room, quite melted in tenderness."*

Having taken a tender, and, as he justly apprehended, a last farewel of his friends in Staffordshire, Johnson returned, by the way of Oxford, to London, and reached the Capital on the sixteenth of November.

Both the asthma and dropsy had, for several weeks before his arrival in town, threatened him with a serious return, and he was, soon after that event, seized with a most violent and alarming paroxysm. His attachment to literature, however, still continued as strong as ever; he amused himself, during his restless nights, in translating from the Greek into Latin Verse several Epigrams in the Anthologia, and sent to Mr. Nichols a Catalogue of the Authors of the Universal History, with an account of their respective shares in that arduous undertaking; a piece of information which he had derived from Mr. Swinton, one of the most laborious writers of the work, and which he now requested Mr. Nichols to deposit in the British Museum.

All that could be effected by the powers of me-

* Life of Johnson, vol. 4. p. 351, 352.

dicine was assiduously procured for him, and he had the diligent and gratuitous attendance of Drs. Heberden, Brocklesby, Warren, Butter, and Mr. Cruikshank. His constitution was, however, too much broken to admit of any thing but palliatives, and he therefore prepared for death with firmness and resignation. His apprehensions of dissolution, which had so frequently embittered his hours of comparative health, ceased with his hope of recovery, and his last days were composed, and apparently exempt from all despondency.

In the week previous to his decease, he burnt all his papers and letters; of the latter "those written by his mother drew from him a flood of tears, when the paper they were written on was all consumed. Mr. Sastres saw him cast a melancholy look upon their ashes, which he took up and examined, to see if a word was still legible."* Among his papers we have to regret the loss of two quarto volumes, "containing a full, fair, and most particular account of his own life, from his earliest recollection.† A fragment, however, if not of this work, of another written by Johnson with the title of Annals, has been preserved and

* Johnson's Letters, vol. 2. p. 383.

† Boswell's Johnson, vol. 4. p. 434.

published; it extends but to his eleventh year, and is, consequently, of little value.*

The period was now at hand, when this great, this good and pious man was destined to exchange the sorrows and anxieties of this feverish world, for a more pure and perfect state of being. On the evening of the 13th of December, 1784, and in the 75th year of his age, he expired so calmly, that the persons who were sitting in the room only knew that he had ceased to breathe by the sudden failure of the sound which had for some days accompanied his respiration.

His remains were deposited in Westminster Abbey, adjoining the tomb of Garrick; they were attended to that venerable pile by most of his friends, and by many of the members of the Literary Club. Over the grave, at his own request, was laid a large blue flag stone with the following inscription,

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.
Obiit xiii die Decembris
Anno Domini
MDCCLXXXIV.
Ætatis suæ LXXV.

* It is entitled, "An Account of the Life of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from his Birth to his Eleventh Year, written by himself. To which are added, original Letters to Dr. Samuel Johnson, by Miss Hill Boothby. From the MSS.

A subscription for a cenotaph to his memory in St. Paul's Cathedral was, soon after his death, commenced by the Literary Club. The friends and admirers of Johnson hastened to contribute their support; and on February 23d, 1796, it was opened to the public curiosity. This monument, which was executed by Bacon, at an expence of eleven hundred guineas, exhibits a colossal figure of the Moralist leaning against a column; and beneath is the following classical and appropriate epitaph from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Parr:

A ☧ Ω

SAMVELI · JOHNSON.

GRAMMATICO · ET · CRITICO

SCRIPTORUM · ANGLICORUM . LITTERATE · PERITO

POETÆ · LUMINIBUS · SENTENTIARUM

ET · PONDERIBUS · VERBORUM · ADMIRABILI

MAGISTRO · VIRTUTIS · GRAVISSIMO

HOMINI · OPTIMO · ET · SINGULARIS · EXEMPLI

QUI · VIXIT · ANN · LXXV · MENS · II · DIEB · XIIII

DECESSIT · IDIB · DECEMBR · ANN · CHRIST . ClↃ · IↃCC · LXXXIIII

SEPULT · IN · AED · SANCT · PETR · WESTMONASTERIENS.

XIII · KAL · JANUAR · ANN · CHRIST · ClↃ · IↃCC · LXXXV

AMICI · ET · SODALES · LITTERARII.

PECUNIA · CONLATA

H · M · FACIENDD · CURAVER.

preserved by the Doctor; and now in possession of Richard Wright, Surgeon; Proprietor of the Museum of Antiquities, Natural and Artificial Curiosities, &c. Lichfield, 12mo. 1805.

In a transept, or recess, near the South door of the Cathedral Church of Lichfield, a bust has been, likewise, erected to his memory, with this Inscription on the sarcophagus beneath:

The Friends of
Samuel Johnson, LL. D.
A native of Lichfield,
Erected this Monument,
To the Memory of
A man of extensive learning,
A distinguished moral writer, and
A sincere Christian.
He died the 13th of December, 1784,
Aged 75 years.

From the narration which we have now given of the studies and pursuits of Dr. Johnson, his literary character will, I trust, be accurately appreciated; in order, however, to present the subject under one view, it will be necessary to contract the picture, and to exhibit a retrospective miniature of his mind and its productions.

It cannot be affirmed of Johnson, that his erudition was either very profound, or very extensive; he was an excellent Latin scholar, but his knowledge of Greek was neither copious nor intimate. With French and Italian he was grammatically well acquainted, but spoke neither with facility.

His reading, however, was vast and various, though desultory, and his memory was of pro-

digious strength. But his great characteristic was uncommon vigour and logical precision of intellect, which, combined with a keen and penetrating judgment, and with a varied and close acquaintance with the different classes of mankind, enabled him to display, from the sources of his own mind, and independent of books, such a comprehensive view of his subject, such accuracy of perception and lucidity of discrimination, as threw light upon every question, however intricate, and proved the best of all practical guides in the customary occurrences of life.

To the possession of these inestimable qualities, in a degree seldom, if ever, exceeded, was added such a masterly intimacy with his native language, such a promptitude and precision in its use, that his conversation, which abounded likewise in wit and humour, had all the force, the elegance, and arrangement of the best written page.

Yet the style which he adopted as an author was polished with great care and corrected with indefatigable attention. It has beauties of peculiar lustre, and defects which are very apparent; but it has, upon the whole, greatly contributed, and more than the style of any other writer, to the correctness, the dignity, and harmony of English composition.

To much knowledge of the sciences of natural and experimental philosophy he had few pretensions; but he possessed the most valuable of all the arts in full perfection, "the art of thinking, the art of using his own mind," the most difficult of all acquisitions. His mind too was stored with an exhaustless fund of imagery, which has rendered his prose, if not his poetry, in a very high degree rich and splendid.

After this brief summary of the general character of his mind, let us recapitulate the various channels into which its efforts were directed.

As a POET he cannot claim a station in the first rank. He is a disciple of Pope; all that strong sentiment, in nervous language and harmonious metre, can effect, he possesses in a high degree. We may further affirm, that his *London*, his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, his *Prologue on the Opening of Drury-Lane Theatre*, and his *Stanzas on the Death of Levet*, will never die.

To excellence as a BIBLIOGRAPHER he had many pretensions; strength of memory, an insatiable love of books, and a most extraordinary facility in acquiring an intimacy with their contents. What he has produced in this department is not of much extent, but it is well performed.

His merits as a BIOGRAPHER are so prominent as to be beyond all dispute. His Lives of Savage,

of Cowley, of Dryden, and of Pope, are masterpieces, which, in many respects, can fear no rivalry. An intimate acquaintance with the human heart, and the most skilful introduction of moral and monitory precept, combine to render many of his productions under this head unspeakably valuable to the dearest interests of mankind. It must not be concealed, however, that they are occasionally deformed by his prejudices, his aversions, and his constitutional gloom.

In his character as an Essayist, though essentially different in mode from, he ranks next in value to, Addison. He lashes the vices rather than ridicules the follies of mankind; and his wit and humour are, by no means, so delicate and finely shaded, as those of his predecessor. In force, in dignity, in splendour of eloquence; in correctness of style, melody of cadence and rotundity of period; in precision of argument, and perspicuity of inference, he is much superior to the author of the Spectator; but, on the other hand, he must yield the palm in ease and sweetness, in simplicity and vivacity. The three great faults, indeed, of Johnson as an Essayist, are, a style too uniformly laboured and majestic for the purposes of a popular essay, a want of variety in the choice of subject, and in his survey of

human life, a tone too gloomy and austere, too querulous and desponding. The *Rambler* is, however, notwithstanding these defects, a work that, in vigour of execution, and comprehensiveness of utility, will not easily be paralleled; it is, in fact, a vast treasury of moral precept, and ethic instruction.

The reputation of Johnson as a PHILOLOGER appears to be somewhat on the decline. The attention which has been lately paid to Lexicography has laid open many omissions and defects in his Dictionary; but it should be considered, that a work of this kind must necessarily be defective; and that with our author rests the sole merit of having chalked out a plan, which, if not filled up by his own execution, must, there is every reason to think, be closely followed by his emulators, to attain the perfection at which he aimed.

When we consider Johnson under the appellation of a NOVELLIST, it is impossible not to regret that *Rasselas* is the only work on which he can properly found a claim to the title. Yet we must add, that if in beauty of imagery, sublimity of sentiment, and knowledge of men and manners, too much praise cannot be given to this philosophic tale, it is obligatory on us to confess that it is greatly deficient in two essential qualifications of a legitimate novel, plot and incident.

Rasselas indeed is merely the vehicle of the author's opinions on human life, and which, we are sorry to remark, partake of the same gloom which darkens the pages of the Rambler.

A very few lines will sketch our author's pretensions to the honours of a COMMENTATOR. The plan of his edition of Shakspeare has been much and justly admired; and no greater proof can be given of its excellence, than that every subsequent annotator has pursued the path which he had laid open. He was himself, however, too indolent, and too deficient in the very line of reading which he had recommended for the illustration of his bard, to carry his own instructions into effect; his edition, therefore, though it has been the parent of the best that we possess, is now of little value.

Not much, I am afraid, can be said in favour of our author as a POLITICIAN. He was at one time a most furious Jacobite, and his tenets at all times with regard to legislation were vehement, confined, and partial; so arbitrary, indeed, as to be frequently repugnant to the spirit of the British Constitution. He was, however, a high-flown Tory on principle; and his political pamphlets, though deficient in candour, display considerable subtlety in point of argument, and much energy and perspicuity of style.

With a few deductions for prejudices which he had early imbibed, his merits as a TOURIST will appear great and unclouded. His object was to analyse and compare men, manners, and modes of life; and his volume is at once elegant, philosophic, and ingenious.

That he is entitled, in the most honourable sense of the term, to the appellation of a CRITIC, those who shall merely peruse his *Preface to Shakspeare*, and his *Lives* of *Cowley*, *Dryden*, and *Pope*, will not probably deny. Since the days of Quintilian, indeed, no better specimens of criticism than these have been given to the world. How highly is it to be lamented then, that, prosecuting the study of his "Lives," we find the residue for the most part tinctured and deformed by relentless prejudices; by party-zeal and unfeeling dogmatism; by a spirit systematically hostile to received opinion, and unfriendly to contemporary merit. With all these defects, however, and they are strikingly prominent, great has been the benefit derived to elegant literature, from the publication of his Critical Biography. It has established an era in the Republic of Letters; it has set an example in this country, which has been assiduously followed, of recording the events attendant on the lives, the studies, and publications of literary men; and it has given birth

to a widely extending taste for critical disquisitions.

From the usual tenour of his style it was not to be expected that our great moralist would excel as an EPISTOLARY WRITER. The letters of Johnson, however, though sometimes not entirely free from his customary elaboration, are, in general, graceful, easy, and perspicuous. They fully develope the character of the man; some are gloomy, some pathetic and beautifully moral, others lively, domestic, and interesting. If they cannot be said to rival the letters of Cowper, yet will they still take their station among the best epistolary collections in our language.

The opinions and principles of the Doctor as a THEOLOGIAN are chiefly to be gathered from his conversation, as preserved by Mr. Boswell, and from his prayers. He appears from these to have been a zealous High-churchman, with a strong bias towards some of the Roman Catholic tenets. His piety and devotion were warm and sincere; and his prayers, the language of which is altogether plain, simple, and unadorned, teach us, that his faith, his humility, and gratitude, were great. From an ardent desire of further evidence with regard to the state of the departed, he was solicitous to ascertain the possibility of the re-appearance of the dead. His

anxiety on this subject rendered him superstitious, though not credulous; for he was, in a very extraordinary degree, minute and cautious in examining the supposed proofs, and was, more than once, instrumental in detecting their fallacy, and exposing the arts of imposture. To many of his *Sermons* much praise is due for their perspicuity of style, their felicity of illustration, and their sound practical morality.

We may, indeed, close this summary, with the affirmation, that, if Addison be excepted, no writer of the eighteenth century can be said to have contributed so highly, so copiously, and so permanently, to the improvement of our literature and language as JOHNSON. Whether considered as a BIOGRAPHER, an ESSAYIST, a LEXICOGRAPHER, or a CRITIC, he is alike entitled to the gratitude of his country and of mankind.*

* There were two works that Johnson had long wished to carry into execution, and which, if health had been allowed him, would most probably have seen the light; namely, a Translation of *Thuanus*, and a Life of *Oliver Cromwell*.

APPENDIX, No. 1.

THOUGH all the works upon which the reputation of Dr. Johnson rests, have been amply noticed in the preceding Life; yet many small fugitive pieces, such as Prefaces, Dedications, Introductions, Proposals, &c. &c. have been purposely omitted. To give a catalogue of these will afford proof of the Doctor's versatility of talent, and of his readiness to oblige those who petitioned for his assistance.

So altogether temporary or local, however, are the chief of these contributions, that to introduce them in a regular edition of our author's productions, would be to most readers uselessly to enhance its bulk. To record that they have existed, is sufficient for our present purpose.

1738. Preface to the Gentleman's Magazine.

1739. Address to the Reader of the Gentleman's Magazine.

Appeal to the Public in behalf of the Editor.

Considerations on the case of Dr. Trapp's Sermons.

1740. Preface to the Gentleman's Magazine.

1741. Preface to the Gentleman's Magazine.
Abridged Debate on the Humble Petition and Advice of the Rump Parliament to Cromwell.
Translation of Abbe Guyon's Dissertation on the Amazons.

1742. Preface to the Gentleman's Magazine.
Essay on the Account of the Conduct of the Duchess of Marlborough.
Foreign History for the Gentleman's Magazine.

1743. Preface to the Gentleman's Magazine.
Advertisement for Osborne concerning the Harleian Catalogue.
Dedication to Dr. Mead of James's Medical Dictionary.

1744. Preface to the Gentleman's Magazine.

1748. Foreign History for the Gentleman's Magazine.

1751. Dedication to the Earl of Middlesex of Mrs. Lennox's Female Quixotte.

1753. Dedication to Lord Orrery of Mrs. Lennox's Shakspeare Illustrated.

1756. Preliminary Address to the Literary Magazine.
Dedication and Preface to Payne's Game of Draughts.

760. Address of the Painters to George the IIId. on his Accession to the Throne.
Dedication of Baretti's Italian and English Dictionary.
Introduction to the Proceedings of the Committee for Cloathing the French Prisoners.
762. Dedication to the King of Dr. Kennedy's System of Astronomical Chronology.
Preface to the Catalogue of the Artist's Exhibition.
763. Dedication to the Earl of Shaftesbury of Roger Ascham's English Works.
Dedication to the Queen of Hoole's Tasso.
Account of the Detection of the Imposture of the Cock-Lane Ghost.
767. Dedication to the King of Adams's Treatise on the Globes.
773. Preface to Macbean's Dictionary of Ancient Geography.
775. Proposals for publishing the Works of Mrs. Charlotte Lennox.
Preface to Baretti's Easy Lessons in Italian and English.
776. Proposals for publishing an Analysis of the Scotch Celtick Language, by the Rev. William Shaw.

1777. Dedication to the King of the Posthumous Works of Dr. Pearce.

1780. Advertisement for Mr. Thrale to the Worthy Electors of the Borough of Southwark.

The Prefaces and Introductions not included in this catalogue, have been, as of superior importance, noticed in the Life of our Author.

APPENDIX, No. 2.

THE very important station which Johnson had filled in the world of Letters, and the high character which he had uniformly sustained, both as a man and as a scholar, combined to render his decease an object of long-continued regret and literary commemoration. His every word, and every action, have been recorded with unprecedented minuteness, and his works have been repeatedly published. To offer a list of these Memoirs, and of the best editions of his writings, is the object of this appendix. The former may be divided into *Sermons, Poems, Sketches, Anecdotes* and *Lives.*

Sermons. A Sermon preached before the University of Oxford on his Death, by the Rev. Mr. Agutter.

Tribute to his Memory by Dr. Fordyce, in his "Addresses to the Deity." 12mo. 1785.

Poems. "Elegy on the Death of Dr. Johnson," by Samuel Hobhouse, Esq. 4to. 1785.

"Poetical Review of the Moral and

Literary Character of Dr. Johnson," by John Courtenay, Esq. M. P. 4to. 1788.

Sketches. "Biographical Sketch of Dr. Johnson," by Thomas Tyers, Esq. in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1784.

"Essay on the Life, Character, and Writings of Dr. Johnson," by Joseph Towers, LL. D. 8vo. 1786.

Character of Dr. Johnson, by Dr. Horne, Bishop of Norwich, in the Olla Podrida, N° 13. 1787.

"Two Dialogues; containing a Comparative View of the Lives, Characters, and Writings, of Philip the late Earl of Chesterfield, and Dr. Samuel Johnson," 12mo. 1787.

"The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL. D." by James Boswell, Esq. 8vo. 1785.

Anecdotes. Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson, by Mrs. Piozzi, 8vo. 1785.

Lives. "The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D. by Sir John Hawkins, 8vo. 1787.

"Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D." by James Boswell, Esq. 2 vol. 4to. 1791. and since repeatedly in 4 vol. 8vo.

" An Essay on the Life and Genius of Samuel Johnson, LL. D." by Arthur Murphy, Esq.

" The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D. With Critical Observations on his Works," by Robert Anderson, M. D.

The minute, and, sometimes, trivial, anecdotes with which a few of these productions abound, have given rise to some pleasant ridicule from the pens of Colman and Dr. Wolcot. An Ode, the production of the first of these gentlemen, we shall transcribe for the amusement of our readers.

A Posthumous Work of S. Johnson. An Ode.
April 15, 1786.

1

St. Paul's deep bell, from stately tow'r,
Had sounded once and twice the hour,
Blue burnt the midnight taper;
Hags their dark spells o'er cauldron brew'd,
While Sons of Ink their work pursu'd,
Printing the Morning Paper.

2.

Say *Herald, Chronicle,* or *Post,*
Which then beheld great JOHNSON's Ghost,
Grim, horrible, and squallid?
Compositors their letters dropt,
Pressmen their groaning engine stopt,
And Devils all grew pallid.

3.

Enough! the Spectre cried; Enough!
No more of your fugacious stuff,
Trite Anecdotes and Stories;
Rude Martyrs of Sam. Johnson's name,
You rob him of his honest fame,
And tarnish all his glories.

4.

First in the futile tribe is seen
Tom Tyers in the Magazine,
That teazer of Apollo!
With goose-quill he, like desperate knife,
Slices, as Vauxhall beef, my life,
And calls the town to swallow.

5.

The cry once up, the Dogs of News,
Who hunt for paragraphs the stews,
Yelp out Johnsoniana!
Their nauseous praise but moves my bile,
Like Tartar, Carduus, Camomile,
Or Ipecacuanha.

6.

Next Boswell comes (for 'twas my lot
To find at last *one* honest Scot)
With constitutional vivacity,
Yet, garrulous, he tells too much,
On fancied failings prone to touch,
With sedulous loquacity.

7.

At length—Job's patience it would tire—
Brew'd on my lees, comes Thrale's *Entire*,
Straining to draw my picture;
For She a common-place-book kept,
Johnson at Streatham din'd and slept,
And who shall contradict her?

8.

THRALE, lost 'mongst Fidlers and *Sopranos*,
With them play *Fortes* and *Pianos*,
Adagio and *Allegro!*
I lov'd THRALE's widow and THRALE's wife;
But now, believe, to write my life
I'd rather trust my Negro.*

9.

I gave the Public works of merit,
Written with vigour, fraught with spirit;
Applause crown'd all my labours:
But thy delusive pages speak
My palsied pow'rs, exhausted, weak,
The scoff of friends and neighbours.

10.

They speak me insolent and rude,
Light, trivial, puerile, and crude,
The child of Pride and Vanity;
Poor Tuscan-like Improvisation
Is but of English sense castration,
And infantine inanity.

11.

Such idle rhymes, like Sybil's leaves,
Kindly the scatt'ring wind receives;
The gath'rer proves a scorner.
But hold! I see the coming day!
—The Spectre said, and stalk'd away
To sleep in POET'S CORNER.†

* His Black Servant.

† Colman's Prose on several Occasions, accompanied by ıe Pieces in Verse, 3 vols. 12mo. 1787.

Of the EDITIONS of the Works of Johnson the two principal are by *Sir John Hawkins* and *Mr. Murphy*. Sir John's appeared in 1787, in eleven volumes 8vo; and four volumes more were at different periods subsequently added. The collection was hasty and indigested, and several pieces were included decidedly not the productions of Johnson. The Life too was bulky, inelegant, and full of irrelevant matter.

In consequence of these defects, another edition was brought forward in 1792, under the superintendance of Arthur Murphy, Esq. which occupies twelve volumes in octavo, with the Essay on the Genius and Writings of Johnson prefixed. It has passed through the press several times: a proof that the public is satisfied with the arrangement and execution; the former of which is chronological, and the latter correct and elegant.

We must, notwithstanding, declare, that no complete edition of the Works of Johnson has yet been published; not one in which his "Prayers and Meditations," his "Letters," and his "Sermons," are included. It is true, that Mr. Murphy has given us a *few* of his Prayers and a *few* of his Letters; but they ought, as best unfolding the heart of the man, to have been published.

entire: he has also omitted his "Sermons," and his "Fountains, a Fairy Tale."*

When these shall have been added, all that is necessary will probably have been done; for the catalogue which we have given in Appendix, N° 1, and the "Debates in Parliament," are, with perhaps one or two exceptions, of a nature too local and temporary to admit of republication, and the "Dictionary" should always be a separate work.

* I allude to the edition of 1801.

END OF VOL. IV.

J. Seeley, Printer, Buckingham.

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